THE IMAGE OF THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE VERSUS THE FOUR-YEAR
UNIVERSITY: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF TWO FLORIDA NEWSPAPERS

By

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The general goal of this study was to compare the coverage of Florida state

universities and community colleges in major metropolitan newspapers. The more

specific goal of the study was to compare the coverage of community colleges within the

reading areas covered by major metropolitan newspapers to the closest four-year state

university. The institutions studied were the University of South Florida (USF), the

University of North Florida (UNF), Hillsborough Community College (HCC), Pasco-

Hernando Community College (PHCC), Florida Community College at Jacksonville

(FCCJ), and St. Johns River Community College (JRCC). In addition, the two flagship

universities, University of Florida (UF) and Florida State University (FSU), also were

analyzed in terms of the amount and content of the coverage they received versus that of

the community colleges and the four-year universities in the cities served by the major

metropolitan newspapers.

A content analysis was conducted of the *Tampa Tribune* and the *Florida Times Union*. Four hundred and seventy-four articles were analyzed in terms of newspaper sections, frames, topics, and sources. The articles studied were published from July 1, 2000, to June 30, 2003.

There was a clear difference in the amount of coverage between the community colleges and the four-year universities. In terms of the total number of stories, USF received more coverage than HCC and PHCC. Likewise, UNF received far more coverage than FCCJ and SJRCC. And in some instances, UF and FSU received more coverage than the community colleges.

However, an analysis of the content of the articles revealed less specific conclusions. Although there were some differences in terms of topics, frames, and news sources, when comparing the four-year universities and the community colleges, the results were far less definitive than the comparison of the number of articles.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

To garner power, to get things done, to achieve the political and financial resources to meet the requirements of its mission, the community college needs "to marshal public support" (Gleazer, 1998, p. 175). In the realm of education, public opinion is not inconsequential. A community college does not operate in a vacuum, free to choose its destiny. It needs the support of the public and policymakers. When policymakers decide policy, public opinion polls have a significant influence on their decision-making practices. Unfortunately, the public is not always cognizant of the complex, multi-faceted positive influence that community colleges have on our society. The leaders of community colleges constantly need to reinforce the positive influence of the community college to the general public so that policymakers will continue to appropriate the funds necessary to meet the goals of their institutions (Campbell, Leverty, & Sayles, 1996).

Therefore, it is essential for the leaders of the community colleges to understand that their institutions "function within a political arena where public relations" as well as image influences the amount of support that will be received (Cohen & Brawer, 1994, p. 212). Public relations may not be the first order of priority for presidents of community colleges, but it must be a priority.

However, in this politically driven tug of war for the attention of policymakers and the public, who exerts more pull the community college or the public four-year

university? Part of the answer to that question may lie in the fact that state legislatures have exacted vigorous rules for funding for community colleges that do not exist for four-year institutions. Many faculty and staff of community colleges contend that the different treatment stems, in part, from a public perception that the four-year institutions are superior to the community college (Garmon, 1999).

How does the American public define excellence in higher education? Is the image rooted in a collage of stereotypes from Hollywood to Madison Avenue, where all smart children grow up to attend a university and parents proudly display the pennants "mounted on their artfully decorated bedroom walls"? (Parnell, 1993, p. 4) The perception of the quality of an education may be as much a factor of architecture as curriculum: "The ivy covered walls and old-world architecture has turned many young heads toward enrollment in a four-year college" (Sims, 1997, p. 4).

The word prestige, as defined by Webster's dictionary (McKechnie, 1987), is "the power to command admiration and esteem" and "reputation or distinction based on brilliance of achievement, character, etc." (p. 1425). In the realm of higher education, prestige may be considered in terms of three elements: "the quality of incoming students, the amount of federal research funding, and athletics programs" (Goldman, Gates, & Brewer, 2001, p. 2). Student quality is often measured in terms of high school grade point averages and test scores. Research and athletics are quantified based on post-graduate programs and Division I-A sports, respectively (Goldman, Gates, & Brewer, 2001). For the community college, excluded from these three criteria of perceived quality of higher education, its leaders would be hard pressed to argue that their institutions are equally prestigious as the four-year university. To the American public,

for whom the essence of quality higher education are the SAT scores of incoming freshmen, a winning football team, and Nobel prize laureates, the community college may be only an afterthought, if it is even thought of at all.

As public perceptions filter into the mindset of policymakers in state capitals across the nation, what influence do these perceptions have on policymakers in terms of the value of the community college versus the four-year institution? Americans associate quality and value with the perceived status and prestige provided by the four-year institution. The community college, with its low tuition and open enrollment, often suffers in comparison with research universities. "In the words of a state senator who is quite supportive of community colleges, 'They are not glamorous'" (Tschechtelin, 1994, pp. 112-113).

What is the community college? According to Microsoft CEO Bill Gates, "Community colleges have an important role to play in making certain we have skilled workers ready to help businesses take advantage of all the opportunities in the Digital Age" (American Association of Community Colleges, n.d.). Conversely, Howard Stern, national radio personality and self-proclaimed "King of All Media," once referred to community colleges as "high schools with ashtrays" (Sims, 1997, p. 4). The words and symbols used by Gates and Stern strike at the heart of the credibility of the community college. But in a society where the sound bite carries more weight than dialogue, who has more influence, Gates or Stern? This battle of words, focusing on the junior/community college for the hearts and minds of the American public and policymakers, has been going on for over one hundred years.

In 1892, William Rainey Harper, the individual who most influenced the initial development of the junior college in the United States, "founded the greatest democratic movement in the history of American higher education" (Witt, Wattenbarger, Gollattscheck & Suppinger, 1995, p. 16). Although the term "democracy" has positive connotations in terms of the philosophy of government, in higher education, "democracy" can connote an inferior education.

The community college, with labels such as "low-cost," "vocational-technical training," " part-time students," "access to all students," and "open admission," must fight an image problem that does not exist within the walls of four-year institutions (Knoell, 1997). In other words, with regard to higher education, does the public prefer democracy or elitism?

In the 1970s, when the legislature of the state of New York created a policy to democratize admissions into the four-year institutions by instituting open enrollment to improve minority access, many decried this trend as a dire threat to the very legitimacy of the university. Then Vice President of the United States Spiro Agnew felt that open admission would lead to "giveaways of 100,000 devalued diplomas" (Lavin, 2000, p. 1144). Ultimately, open enrollment is a double-edged sword for the community college. Although it may offer more educational access and opportunity for some, for others, open enrollment "has much the same appeal as using public restrooms" (Sims, 1997, p. 5).

If open admission symbolizes less than an adequate education, then the policy of providing remediation also may engender negative perceptions in the eyes of the public and policymakers. In the 1990s, New York's governor George Pataki eliminated remedial courses from the senior colleges and made them the exclusive province of the

community college. For the community college, the stigma associated with remediation, along with open admission, can influence how those not directly associated with the institution might perceive the quality of the education available to learners who require remedial services from an institution that cannot deny them access. Remediation has been attacked as "educational welfare, pollution of the collegiate terrain" for a group of students who "are becoming a new caste of academic untouchables" (Lavin, 2000, p. 1153).

Regardless of its one-hundred-year history of providing a quality education, the community college often remains "invisible," its crucial role "veiled" from the community it serves, and its students "marginalized" (Griffith & O'Conner, 1994, pp. 4-5):

> Today, neither the American public in general nor those especially concerned with education fully comprehend the reality and the potential of the community college. Most middle-class, college oriented people see these colleges, if they see them at all, as deficient imitations of "real" colleges or as training schools. As a result, community colleges become invisible in the eyes of the public. (Griffith & O'Conner, 1994, pp.99-100)

As a consequence of this public impression, community colleges are trivialized in the realm of higher education:

> Community colleges are not seen in proportion to their importance and the students who enroll in the community colleges are marginalized. A large part of the American political and commercial system has a strong tendency to look the other way when it comes to the real and practical needs and opportunities of these less affluent, less educated men, women, and children. (Griffith & O'Conner, 1994, pp. 99-100)

In terms of communications theory, where does the concept of stature fit and what influence does it have on whether or not a message is received, is processed, and influences attitudes of the receivers? If community college leaders must argue the

validity of their institutions before the public and state legislatures, how does the perceived lacked of stature or prestige affect the outcome of their arguments?

The art of rhetoric, initially developed by Corax and Tisias of Greece in the fifth century B.C. and refined by Aristotle more than a century later, is a system of arguments linked by a series of proofs in order to support claims and thereby persuade an audience (McCroskey, 1997). A major element of this process is the concept of ethos, which, according to Aristotle, is the most significant element of the rhetorical process. Ethos refers to the speaker's "credibility, prestige, and personal proof" as perceived by the receiver (McCroskey, 1997).

Anecdotally accepted for centuries, ethos, or source credibility, was empirically tested in the twentieth century. In the communication model, source factors have great influence on whether or not a message is likely to influence an attitude change: "The source of a persuasive communication may be a person (e.g., the President of the United States), a group (e.g., your family), an institution (e.g., Stanford University), and so forth" (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981, p. 60). Source credibility, whether or not the source is perceived as believable, has a marked influence on attitude change. One of the most significant elements of source credibility is expertise. Expertise has been found in numerous studies to have a significant influence on attitude change (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981).

To persuade, to achieve long-term, positive attitude change, positive source credibility is essential. From the point of view of the community college leader, who is often charged with influencing policymakers and the public to support the institution

through taxes, an understanding of the means of gaining credibility is essential (Honeyman & Bruhn, 1996).

If colleges and universities can be described as resource-acquiring institutions, then without the support of policymakers, resources are harder to come by. Without resources, the mission of higher education is compromised. Policymakers are driven by public support in order to keep their jobs. If the public is myopic regarding the community colleges and the students they serve, then are elected policymakers likely to share this myopia?

It is essential the post-secondary institutions understand the nature of their "stature: with their important constituencies" (Alfred & Weismann, 1988). Stature relates to whether or not there is an alignment of the values of the institution and the society it serves. In addition, the institution then needs to communicate to the stakeholders, through appropriate channels, how the values within its mission coincide with the values they associate with successful post-secondary education (Alfred & Weismann, 1988). As with any communication system, the sender, in order to realize success, must be open to the feedback from the receiver (Pfau & Parrott, 1993). Through utilizing this transactional system, the institution can better understand if it is meeting the needs of society.

Once the message is received, the institution must translate constituent needs into programs and then relay that information back to the constituents: "In response to changing conditions in the economy, public opinion, and the behavior of competitors, profit and nonprofit organizations have instituted a variety of techniques to enhance stature" (Alfred & Weismann, 1988, p. 3). The measure of success of stature may be

found in corporate visibility and changing public opinion. The threats to the institution when stature is low may include legal, economic, and social sanctions as a result of poor perceptions from external publics.

In order to survive, community colleges, like any other institution that requires public support, need to understand their stature and the means to make periodic adjustments to the elements that influence their stature. But who defines stature? How do these definitions find their way into the public consciousness? Do these definitions really matter in terms of the success or failure of the community college?

The structure of any communication model consists of senders, receivers, messages, and the channels through which the senders and receives transmit those messages (Andersen & Pryor, 1992). The words of both Stern and Gates flow to millions of people through the complex and powerful networks of mass media. In the early 1970s, Maxwell McCombs began to formulate the fundamental concepts of the theory of agenda setting. Along with Donald Shaw, McCombs (1972) began the seminal research into this theory. Agenda setting postulates that mass media do not influence the way we think but the issues that we think about (McCombs, 1977). Mass media then do set the agenda for their consumers and therefore influence how people view the world outside the parameters of their immediate awareness.

In terms of stature, ethos, and credibility, if the mass media are relaying negative symbols about community colleges, then based on agenda setting theory, it is particularly those who may have little direct contact with community colleges who will see them negatively. This is a public relations problem that must be solved.

More than 300 years before McCombs and Shaw's research on agenda setting, higher education institutions in what were British colonies of America cultivated a positive image in the press as a means to attain funds to grow and survive. Anecdotally and instinctively, these early educational leaders understood how public opinion could be shaped through the influence of the printed words in newspapers. Before the American Revolution, colonial American colleges and universities actively sought positive press coverage. Lacking the prestige and the history of the more established colleges in England, colonial colleges had to engage in a concerted effort to raise operating funds. Much like the community college of today, the perceived stature of the colonial universities did not match up with the English institutions in terms of prestige and history. Both Harvard and King's College, now known as Columbia University, developed public relations strategies focusing on positive newspaper coverage in order to raise funds. As the number of newspapers increased in the colonies, colleges and universities found ways to advance themselves through positive exposure in both articles and advertising in those newspapers. After the American Civil War, Charles W. Eliot, then president of Harvard, believed that public opinion played a significant role in the advancement of higher education (Warner, 1996).

Similar to the colleges of the colonial period, the junior colleges of the late nineteenth century sought to establish a foothold of credibility through effective public relations: "William Rainey Harper, dynamic builder of the University of Chicago, did more than any other educator to harness the power of publicity to the cause of higher education. His methods and resulting success were observed and copied" (Cutlip, 1995, p. 232). Harper sought to generate a sense of goodwill within the community regarding

the University of Chicago while creating an institution "of the highest rank and character" (p. 232). Despite his efforts, Harper's relationship with the local newspapers was not always positive.

One hundred years after Harper's pioneering efforts to garner media support for the fledgling junior college movement, are editors and reporters equipped with the understanding of the multi-dimensional aspects of the mission of the community college? "Reporters often have little factual knowledge or little factual conceptualization of the mission and goals of the two-year college" (Losak, 1994, p. 312).

Dale Parnell, former president of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, lamented that "the vast majority of people who write for national press and television have not experienced a community college, and so it's very hard to explain to them who we are and what we are doing" (Griffith & O'Conner, 1994, pp. 100-101).

If Parnell is correct, then part of the reason that journalists might not understand the community college and its role in education is that, in general, education is inherently complex. It is a multilayered institution with an intricate infrastructure. News often tries to simplify complex issues looking for the sound bite, drama, and human interest (Scheuer, 1999).

For instance, on July 18, 2001, ten-year-old Julia Musser and her father appeared on NBC's *Today Show* (Touchet). Co-host Matt Lauer interviewed the ten-year-old regarding her experience with Red Rocks Community College. Musser enrolled in a basic computer course at Red Rocks. She earned an "A" in the course. When the college's administration learned that Musser was only ten years old, they informed her that she could not register for other courses. During the segment there was only an

anonymous statement from the college to refute the image of a precocious, sweet-looking girl, standing there with her concerned father on the number-one rated morning network television program.

The *Today Show* story about Julia Musser is consistent with the tendency of the media to focus the news in terms of individuals or "actors." (Gans, 1980). In addition, the news media often portray ordinary people as "victims" in conflict with a bureaucracy. The victims "are real people who suffer from red tape, and other bureaucratic phenomena, which are usually depicted as irrational" (Gans, 1980, p. 14). In this instance the victim was Julia Musser and the irrational bureaucracy was Red Rocks Community College.

How then does this story fit into the context of the mission and the connected successes of Red Rocks Community College? The story is told without regard to the thousands of individuals whom Red Rocks has served well. Is this example isolated?

Businesspeople often complain that the reporters take an interest in business only when things go wrong. Indeed studies seem to indicate that journalists take particular interest in a subject that has "an adverse consequence" (Hunt & Grunig, 1994).

Community colleges need to incorporate within their strategic planning initiatives a strategy of understanding the role of mass media: "Strategic planning begins with environmental scanning, a process of studying external environment via newspapers, literature, and periodicals for emerging issues that pose threats or opportunities to an institution. Each issue is evaluated with regard to its possible impact" (Howell, 2000, p.1).

Statement of the Problem

Although the connection between public opinion and press coverage has been established through numerous studies, there never has been a comprehensive examination to determine if there is a difference between coverage of community colleges versus four-year public universities:

> A review of literature focusing on the media's historical role in the development and growth of community colleges turns up very little data. A very real phenomenon surrounds the modern perception of the two-year college; that is, by reputation, word of mouth, or media coverage, community colleges have survived despite the negative identifications attached to them. (Hastings, 2000, p. 6)

Based on the research findings of agenda setting, mass media play an important role in shaping the perspectives of mass media consumers. From the perspective of community college leaders, endeavoring to garner public and political favor to gain the resources necessary to meet the mission goals, whatever information is disseminated to those consumers of mass media may have a profound impact on their ability to influence the perceived image of the community college they serve. By improving their institution's image, community college leaders can enhance their ability to achieve the resources necessary to serve their community.

Mass media do not always present issues with fairness and balance. If community colleges are not presented in a fair and balanced manner in the mass media, this could damage their public image.

Mass media tend to simplify complex issues such as education and therefore may not understand community colleges and their complex missions. As a result, mass media consumers may receive few or imbalanced accounts of the community college mission.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to determine if the coverage of community colleges in two major metropolitan newspapers differs from the coverage four-year institutions receive. The study will examine the following questions:

1.	Is there a difference in the number of articles focusing exclusively on community colleges versus four-year institutions that appear in major metropolitan newspapers?

2.	Is there a difference in terms of the sections where articles focusing exclusively on community colleges versus four-year institutions appear in major metropolitan newspapers?

3.	Are community colleges framed differently than the four-year institutions in articles that appear in major metropolitan newspapers?

4.	Is there a difference in terms of the topics of articles focusing exclusively on community colleges versus four-year institutions that appear in major metropolitan newspapers?

5.	Is there a difference in terms of the sources within articles focusing exclusively on community colleges versus four-year institutions that appear in major metropolitan newspapers?

Importance of Study

The study was a content analysis of two major metropolitan newspapers. The analysis examined the differences in the coverage of community colleges versus four-year universities. Content analyses of mass media are a cornerstone of sound public relations strategies (Lindenmann, 1993). Through good public relations practices, organizations can influence public opinion.

Edmund Gleazer, president of the AACJC from 1958 to 1981, understood that in order for the community college to succeed in its mission to become a positive force in the community, public opinion and positive media relations were essential: "Positive

public opinion is important to help community colleges" (Gleazer, 1998, p. 177).
According to Gleazer (1998), one of the key roles of the community college president is
to develop and maintain strong, positive ties with the media.

According to David Lavin (2000) of the Graduate Center of the City University of
New York, "the expansion of higher education has been a contested process" (p. 1140).
With community colleges fighting for turf and the funds to obtain and maintain that turf,
whatever factors influence the allocation of scarce resources need to be examined and
measured.

Syllogistically, an argument for the study of the coverage of community colleges
in local newspapers could be based on the following premises: Effective public relations
can influence the media, media have an influence on public opinion, public opinion
influences policy, and policy influences the success or failure of a community college to
achieve the goals of its mission.

It is important for community college leaders to understand the connection
between the media and public opinion (Harris, 1997-98). However, empirically
significant measurements of the public image of the community college seem to be in
short supply (Hastings, 2000). This lack of knowledge can have dire consequences for
any institution (Sims, 1997).

An institution relying upon the public goodwill to succeed needs to measure
relevant information emanating from media outlets: "The main point of measurement is
to demonstrate PR's effectiveness and contribution to organizational goals, while
pointing toward steps the organization might take to cultivate and nurture long-term
relationships" (Freitag, 1998, p. 46). Once the data have been measured and synthesized,

then they must be related to the decision makers in a coherent form, free from research and statistical jargon.

Measuring media content provides insight into public opinion and therefore allows the community college leader to better influence policy. To prove the effects of a public relations strategy, it is possible to measure the effects through a communications audit (Lindenmann, 1993). An effective audit incorporates a variety of ongoing measurement tools. In order to analyze the progress of the campaign, an experimental approach, incorporating tools of empirical research, should be used in the planning stages, during implementation, and after the completion of the campaign (Freitag, 1998). One of the tools of the communication audit is a content analysis of key messages relating to the institution (Grunig, 1977).

Part of understanding or developing a strategic plan requires that the leaders of a community college begin with an "environmental scanning, a process of studying the external environment via newspapers, literature, and periodicals for emerging issues that pose threats or opportunities to an institution" (Howell, 2000, p. 1).

Understanding the public perception of the community college is essential to its future success: "Projecting the future for the community colleges of the twenty-first century involves projecting the future for the nation in general its demographics, economy, and public attitudes" (Cohen, 2000, p. 1).

First, a community college is a public agency; its support depends on perceptions of its value by the public and the public's elected representatives. As a public agency the institution's survival depends on patterns of political and financial support that may relate only tangentially to its outcomes. A reality for community colleges is that they must function in a political arena where public relations, coalitions, and interinstitutional cooperation guide decisions regarding support. (Laden, 1997, p. 4)

In working in the area of policy research, can we define the social problem from the perspective of the stakeholders? "The sociopolitical environment involves a range of definitions, assumptions, and values the stakeholders hold about the social problem" (Majchrzak, 1984, p. 28). Are the beliefs the stakeholders have concerning the social problem and its solution determined by the definitions that make up the social problem? How are these definitions formed? What influences their formation?

According to Walter Lippmann (1921), individual opinion "is based not on direct or certain knowledge, but on pictures made by himself or given to him" (p. 25). Preconceptions or stereotypes are often not of our own experiences, but are given to us (Lippmann, 1921). Definitions, not always of our own making, shape public opinion.

Higher education institutions have historically endeavored to shape public opinion through public relations. However, "A great deal of anecdotal evidence indicates that the public relations function is not well integrated into strategic decision making of most organizations" (Bronn, Olson, 1999, p. 351).

> Community college professionals and mass media specialists have the potential to establish symbiotic relationships that allow both to fulfill their missions to serve the public good. In an era of increased accountability for resource expenditures, educators may stretch their budgets by engaging the mass media as willing and helpful partners in promoting the institutions' identity, programs, and services in the media's regular news coverage. (Yee, 2000, p. 1)

Definition of Terms

The following terms are used in this dissertation as defined below.

Agenda setting is a process whereby the media organize information in such a way that certain issues become more salient to the mass media consumer by the very nature of what is covered and what is not covered. Accordong to agenda setting theory, mass media do not influence how the mass media consumer thinks about a certain issue.

Mass media establish what issues will be available for the consideration of the mass media consumer (McCombs, 1977).

Agenda building is a process whereby an organization endeavors to influence how it is covered in mass media outlets through effective public relations techniques (Huckins, 1999).

Priming involves the message from the media connecting with memories of the receiver. The messages stimulate prior knowledge, creating associations with the message and the memories. The media facilitate this process by limiting the number of issues covered, therefore rendering these issues more important from the perspective of the media consumer (Lenart & Targ, 1992).

Framing brings order to abstract concepts by using a reporter's stored phrases and images. Through frames, a reporter pulls out a familiar symbol or cue to describe an event. Is someone who engages in revolutionary acts against her or his government a freedom fighter or a traitor? The answer may depend upon the experiences and cultural values of the reporter.

"**Fairness** usually means the simple inclusion of the other side of the story about conflict" (Fico & Cote, 1998, p. 5).

"**Balance** concerns how equally sides of a conflict are treated relative to one another" (Fico & Cote, 1998, p. 5).

Content analysis is a systematic, rigorous process of analyzing mass media messages either quantitatively or qualitatively (Popping, 2000).

Limitations

The major limitations of the study include the following:

1. The study was limited to two major metropolitan newspapers: *Tampa Tribune* and *Florida Times Union.*

2. The time frame of the study was from July 1, 2000, to June 30, 2003.

3. Stories were located using the Infotrac search system.

4. Stories that were analyzed had to be 500 or more words.

5. The name or initials of the higher education institution had to appear in either the headline or lead paragraph.

6. All stories were taken from the following sections of the newspapers: news, regional news, business news, and opinion/editorial.

7. The higher education institutions to be analyzed had to fit into one of the following criteria: the state university located in the city of the major metropolitan newspaper, community colleges within the reading area of the major metropolitan newspaper, and the Research I institutions in Florida.

Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the study in terms of the development of communication scholarship and the evolution of public relations challenges and strategies in higher education. There is a statement of the problems associated with the public image of the community college and why studying those problems is necessary to the fulfillment of the community college mission.

Chapter 2 reviews the research associated with how mass media influence public perceptions of the world outside the public's direct experiences. There is a focus on the following aspects of communication study: agenda setting, agenda building, priming, framing, fairness, balance, public opinion models, and content analysis. There is also an examination of two content analysis studies focusing on education. The final part of the chapter includes a justification of this study and a summary.

Chapter 3 explains how the study was designed and structured. Research questions are restated as null hypotheses. The procedures of data collection and statistical analyses are explained.

Chapter 4 includes the results of the study.

Chapter 5 includes a summary, findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

CHAPTER 2
PRIOR RESEARCH

Introduction

According to David Honeyman (personal communication, May 12, 2003), a

professor at the University of Florida with expertise in education finance: "Money may

not the most important thing in education, but it is way ahead of whatever is second."

The budgeting of the public sector is a political process that is influenced by the

ideologies, belief systems, and philosophies of a variety of sources: "The lens of public

budgeting," how society perceives the need for money in the public sector, "influences

public policy." Therefore, one could conclude that "public budgeting, is an expression of

our public policy" (Lynch & Lynch, 2002, p. 261).

In politics, policymakers face a myriad of influences competing for their attention

in terms of the financing of the public sector. The issues that receive the most attention

have a greater chance of being "placed on the official agenda" and therefore have a

chance to become policy (Jordan, 2002, p. 204). This process is often contentious.

> The decision maker cannot address all problems simultaneously. Therefore,
> successful participants in the agenda setting-process will see their problems
> addressed, while others will not. Within a political and often crowded
> environment, it is understandable that some issues do not make it to the agenda
> for consideration. Therefore, it is important to attract attention so that the issue is
> distinguishable in the crowd. (Jordan, 2002, p. 205)

John Brademas (1987), a congressman who served more than twenty years under

seven presidents and was a long-time member of the House Education Committee,

acknowledged that there were many influences on the development of public policy.

Influences included who was the president, who controlled the Congress, special interests, and the context of the times. Also included among those influences, according to Brademas, were mass media. Mass media make Congress "less insulated from national trends" (p. 52) and allow "members of Congress to bypass traditional local party organizations and go directly to the people for support" (p. 124).

What influence do mass media have on public opinion? Should the leaders of community colleges care? Brademas believed that mass media do have an influence on policymaking decisions. It might be easy to dismiss Brademas' observations as an isolated example without further evidence that mass media affect the way we think, but even in the early stages of the development of the community college system, mass media were considered an integral part of this process.

When William Rainey Harper began his public relations campaign to gain public and political support for his revolutionary approach to higher education through the newspapers, he was doing so not on the evidence of empirical studies. More than 100 years after Harper's seminal efforts to gain support for two-year colleges through newspapers, much has changed both in terms of mass media outlets and the means to measure the impact of mass media on public perceptions. In the twentieth century, mass media research grew and became more sophisticated (Cutlip, 1995).

In 1920, Walter Lippmann and Charles Merz examined the coverage of the Bolshevik Revolution by the *New York Times* over a three-year period. The findings indicated the *Times* was often inaccurate in its reporting of the events primarily because the reporters received information from unreliable sources. However, the influence in terms of public perception of the Bolshevik Revolution from those who read those stories

was not measured. The research techniques necessary to perform accurate measures from which valid results could be drawn had not yet been developed.

In the intervening years, mass media research has evolved into a tool offering useful insights for public relations practitioners, mass media analysts, and those who are involved in the development of public policy issues. The empirical evidence confirming the influence of mass media upon the public's understanding of the world is clearly substantiated (McCombs & Zhu, 1995). A result of this research is an interconnecting matrix of theories from linguistic relativity, dramatism, agenda setting, agenda building, priming, framing, and public relations. Therefore, what questions need to be asked in order to understand better the relationship between public perception and how that perception is created? Five possible questions have been drawn from the literature.

The first question: Do mass media influence public opinion? In order to answer this question, an examination of theories associated with agenda setting and priming must be undertaken (McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

The second question: How do mass media messages develop and make their way to mass media consumers? An examination of public opinion models, including media ecology theory and situational theory, can lend insight to this question (Van Leuven & Slater, 1991).

The third question: What are the elements of the mass media agenda? More specifically, what are the elements of the agendas of newspapers? An analysis of the agenda should include aspects of fairness, balance, and framing. In addition, specifically what have studies focusing on mass media coverage of education revealed in terms of fairness, balance, and framing (Fico & Cote, 1998)?

The fourth question: Can the agenda be measured and compared empirically between different organizations or mass media outlets? The empirical method of inquiry of mass media through content analysis has produced a wealth of data confirming the reliability of the previous theories (Riffe, Lacy & Fico, 1998).

The fifth question: Can organizations affect the agenda? Studying agenda-building theories (Huckins, 1998) can reveal whether or not organizations outside of mass media organizations can affect the agenda. If there is empirically sound evidence of the agenda building process, this justifies the study of the mass media agenda and its influence because insights gained through such inquiry could lead to developing methods of influencing the agenda (Gosden & Beder, 2001).

The Influence of Language: Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, Dramatism, and Symbols

What are the factors that drive one's perceptions of the universe? If we compare a community college with a four-year university in terms of curriculum and quality of instruction, would there be evidence of a difference either quantitatively or qualitatively in terms of education outcomes? If the answer is no, then why is there a sense that the community college is somehow inferior to the university? If someone who has little or no contact with community colleges hears a media icon such as Howard Stern refer to them as, "high schools with ash trays" (Sims, 1997), what impact does that have on the listener? In this instance, community colleges may be victims of language and the human need to use language to establish reality.

Does language affect the human condition and our ability to function within the parameters of the systems we create? According to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis,

language has its own "linguistic relativity" that has a far-reaching influence on the behavior of a culture (Littlejohn, 1992, p. 208).

      Kenneth Burke, a professor of literary criticism and a leading symbol theorist and proponent of the theory of dramatism, contended that language drives human actions. Within that language are a myriad of symbols (Littlejohn, 1992, pp. 178-179). According to Burke, a human being is a "symbol-using, symbol-making, and symbol-misusing animal" (Burke, 1989, p. 60). These symbols and their interlocking systems create reality in the human mind that has both "overt and covert modes of persuasion" (Burke, 1989, p. 58). These symbols act as a kind of road map, helping us to navigate through our lives. These symbols are approximations of reality or "abbreviations" that often "transcend" what is being symbolized (Burke, 1989, p. 62). According to Burke, reality is "a clutter of symbols about the past combined with whatever things we know mainly through maps, magazines, newspapers, and the like about the present" (1989, p. 58).

      Semanticist S. I. Hayakawa referred to language as a symbol carrier. Words have built-in judgments. Not only do words have an informative function, but they also have affective connotations. Words function on two levels: what the object is and what it means (Hayakawa, 1972, p. 68). Language, with its myriad of symbols both denotative and connotative, allows humans to pool knowledge and influence the future; thus, language can be a powerful means of social control (Hayakawa, 1972, p. 88).

      The transmission of language requires some kind of channel or medium. Speaking is the primary means of delivering language in either interpersonal or group communication (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981). However, on a larger scale, mass media such as newspapers, magazines, radio, and television can transmit a message to millions if not

billions (Borchers, 2002). When the effects of language are combined with the far-ranging influences of mass media, what is the impact on public perceptions?

Agenda Setting and Priming: What the Public Knows

Agenda Setting

Do the mass media influence what we think we think about, when we think about it, and how often we think about it? In 1920, Lippmann and Merz stated that: "It is admitted that a sound public opinion cannot exist without access to the news" (p. 1):

> With little direct experience of politics, people in modern society depend on the news media for information to understand the political world. This provides the press, among others, with great power: the power to focus and frame reality for the public (Park & Kosicki, 1995, p. 207).

In the 1970s Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw developed and tested the theory of agenda setting. Agenda setting is not persuasion through propaganda. Propaganda is usually an overt attempt by some unscrupulous individual or government to overtly affect the attitudes of the receivers of information through mass media (Borchers, 2002). Unlike propaganda, agenda setting affects are subtle and are not necessarily intentional.

Agenda setting theory posits that mass media affect media users in three ways: creating "awareness and knowledge" of issues, "establishing salience among publics," and focusing "public attention" to the "forefront of concern." (McCombs, 1977, pp. 90-91) Agenda setting does not directly shape "attitudes and overt behaviors." (McCombs, 1977, pp. 90-91). Instead, media select and organize information: then the public chooses what information they deem to be more relevant.

The initial study of agenda setting examined whether or not media coverage of the 1968 presidential campaign influenced the attitudes of the receivers of the coverage.

McCombs and Shaw (1972) found that "the influence of media in the 1968 Presidential campaign" did not have an "influence on direction or intensity of the attitudes, but did influence the salience of attitudes" (p. 177): "The political world is reproduced imperfectly in the individual news media. Yet the evidence in this study that voters tend to share the media's 'composite' definition of what is important strongly suggests an agenda-setting function of the mass media" (p. 184). What media do is select events to be covered and prioritize those events in terms of the amount of coverage and the position within the matrix of the media structure. For the consumer of mass media, the perception of what is important is influenced by what media deem to be important. Therefore, if an issue receives a great deal of coverage, the media consumer will be more likely to view that issue as important.

Agenda-setting effects are influenced by factors outside of the parameters of the media. If the issue has relevance to the mass media consumer prior to reading the story or seeing it on television, this reduces the influence of the media agenda. Specifically, in a study of election coverage the agenda-setting effect was seen to be reduced in instances when respondents already had high political interest and significant knowledge concerning issues and candidates (McCombs, Shaw, 1972, p. 185-186).

From the perspective of the community college leader, concern may arise when viewing coverage of one's institution in the media. More specifically, in the political arena, how might the effects of agenda setting influence the ability of community college's leaders to gain political support? Will policymakers, who may never have attended a community college, whose loyalties are likely to be linked to a university, whose constituents are more interested in the K-12 issues, and who perceive a lack of

salience regarding issues affecting the community college, be more vulnerable to the influence of agenda setting?

Agenda setting can influence what media consumers perceive to be important: in addition, there seems to be evidence that media do have an influence regarding "perceptions of the collective salience of issues" (Mutz & Soss, 1997, p. 434). The amount of coverage an issue receives appears to influence directly media consumers in terms of their perception of how the community views a particular issue.

In a political policymaking sense, this subject has significant ramifications. In a democratic society, media play a significant role in the development of social policies and provide a forum for political debate (Hertog & McLeod, 1972). Policymakers, who are often isolated within the confines of their offices within the political machinery of the capitals they work in, may see media coverage as an "indirect indicator" of public opinion and view the media "as an 'alternative electorate' in addition to, and often as a surrogate for, constituent opinion" (Mutz & Soss, 1997, p. 447).

Analyzing the process of policy development is reliant upon "contextual knowledge" (White, 1994, p. 510). Political leaders are more willing to take policy action when the policy is "consistent with public values" (p. 515). And models of policymaking take into consideration that what the general public prefers is "heavily influenced by prevailing social norms" (p. 513). But for policymakers, their sense of public values and social norms and the context into which they fit may be beyond the general parameters of their direct experiences. Therefore, they may look to other means, the media for example, to draw on a sense of public opinion (Mutz & Soss, 1997).

The media not only report the facts about how the issue is evolving but also report, "how publics are organizing around an issue." (Van Leuven, & Slater, 1991, p. 166). Known as "polltaking," this is a concept of media influence that plays a large part in the actions of "political actors, organizational communicators (political candidates and public officials), spokes-persons, and public relations practitioners" (Van Leuven & Slater, 1991, p. 166). When policymakers lack direct contact with their constituents, they often look to the media for cues regarding public opinion. Likewise, the public, lacking specific contact with public opinion beyond their small circle of associations, also may perceive public opinion as a result of media influence, which can lead to an effect referred to as "pluralistic ignorance" (Gunther, & Christen, 1999, p. 278). The result is that those who rely upon mass media for their pictures of the world beyond their own experience may receive a distorted image of public opinion.

Priming

Beyond agenda setting is the theory of media priming. When individuals encounter a number of complex political issues, the cognitive tendency is to avoid in-depth analysis and instead retrieve that information that is "easily retrievable from the top of their minds" (Willnat & Zhu, 1996, p. 232). The priming process involves connecting the message from the media with memories of the receiver. The messages stimulate prior knowledge, creating associations with the message and the memories (Bryant & Thompson, 2002). The media facilitate this process by limiting the number of issues covered, therefore rendering these issues more important from the perspective of the media consumer.

A study of priming effects of Hong Kong politics and the perceived performance of its governor found that "news coverage can affect people's political perceptions in a far more complex way than is suggested by the agenda-setting hypothesis" (Willnat & Zhu, 1996, p. 242). The study indicated that newspapers clearly had a priming influence on their readers in terms of their assessment of the governor. The governor's popularity was, in some ways, a result of the priming influences of the Hong Kong media.

Based on agenda-setting and priming theories, community college leaders who carefully examine how their institutions are covered by the media may gain some insight regarding how the public and policymakers view their institutions. Although this view may be distorted and not grounded in fact, it still may have a profound influence on the community college leaders' ability to garner support for the mission of the community college.

In a complicated society in which it is impossible for everyone to communicate with one another interpersonally and where there is a tendency for the larger societal system to divide into subsystems, mass media can serve as a conduit for the dissemination of public opinion. Within a community, the mass media form a subsystem that is influenced by and influences other subsystems. In addition, members of smaller, more homogeneous communities tend to trust their community mass media outlets more than outside mass media outlets in terms of community issues (Taylor, Lee & Davie, 2000).

The media serve a dual control function in this context, providing both feedback control and distribution control. In the former case, the media basically provide the mechanism through which various subsystems communicate with other

subsystems within the overall systems. In the latter case, the media serve as a disseminator of information on the public agenda, a public record of community concerns and opinions. Through the interactions of these two functions, Tichenor, Donohue, and Olien argued, the media help define social norms through the coverage of positions of various subsystems. (Salmon & Oshagan, 1990, p. 159)

Setting the agenda: Public Opinion Models

Coverage of complex issues is not a single event. As organizations try to mold public opinion and influence policy, there needs to be an awareness of how this process functions. When the leaders of an organization ask their public relations practitioners to set in motion the means to influence public opinion through the media, what can they expect? In the media ecology model, a story evolves in three stages, based both on what is within the story and the type of media carrying that story. In addition, the involvement of the public in terms of participating in the development of the event and the awareness of the event is connected with the public's interests and sense of power to influence the event.

Media ecology theory, a three-step model of the public opinion process, begins with an organization making the media aware of the issue through a newsletter or news conference. This is known as the initiating stage. The next step is the bureaucratic stage. At this point in the process, the message flows from the media to public officials and legislators who become aware of the issue, then possibly confront the issue. As media coverage increases, so does public awareness. The onus of information dissemination rests upon the regional daily newspaper because it has a lot of news space to fill and has a staff large enough to research the information as well as write the stories. The last step is

the legitimized conflict stage. The elements at work are public interest at its zenith, a clear sense of conflict among interested parties, and television playing a key role in portraying this drama (Van Leuven & Slater, 1991).

The next question for public relations professionals is who is likely to pay attention to the messages? The important considerations are whether the media consumer can recognize the issue, whether the issue is perceived as important, and what power does the media consumer has to influence the issue?

The public never should be viewed as a homogeneous mass with singular priorities and common wills, nor are members and equally empowered to act. According to Grunig's situational theory, publics can be categorized as active, aware, latent, or inactive. Each group is "distinguished in terms of how likely they are to attend, process, and respond to communication" (Van Leuven & Slater, 1991, p. 169). The variables that influence each group's level of attention to the message are based on the degree to which individuals within each group have the capacity to recognize the problem, how much they care about the problem, and the degree of influence they have over the problem.

Members of active publics are rich in the knowledge of issues and have the motivation and power to influence the debate. Active publics are the primary targets of information campaigns. Aware publics tend to act only if an issue is clearly made relevant to them. Unlike active publics, they are less likely to be involved, but do have high issue recognition. Latent publics have little sense of empowerment over the issues in their community, their sense of problem recognition is low, and they may be more influenced by group dynamics and interpersonal communication than by the effects of mass media. Latent publics have lower abilities to cognitively analyze an event in any

depth, as compared to active or aware publics. Inactive publics, unlike latent publics,

tend to be isolated entities and are reluctant to become involved in social issues. They

avoid social organizations, are attracted to only those issues very clearly relevant to their

needs, engage in minimal cognitive effort and focus on an issue only on a very

rudimentary level, and only if the issues receives a lot of coverage (Van Leuven & Slater,

1991).

When an organization presents its message into the machinery of public opinion,

an evolutionary process takes place involving the mass media and the public. It is

significant to note the different types of mass media, print and electronic, are not in lock

step with each other and perform different functions.

What is the process by which the publics, different mass media, and those public

relations practitioners who put issues into the agenda interact? In the following public

opinion model, the agenda setting process is broken down into five stages, awareness,

elaboration, understanding, attitude crystallization, and readiness/action. In addition, the

process of how an issue becomes news, who is more likely to pay attention to the news,

and who will act on the news, is also influenced by elements related to interpersonal

communication, small group communication, and organizational communication. (Van

Leuven & Slater, 1991).

The process begins with the awareness stage. An organization may hold a news

conference or send out news releases. The goal is to place the issue on the media's

agenda and to increase basic public awareness. If the organization has a great deal of

visibility and credibility in the community, it is more likely to receive attention. Just

because an organization gains the initial attention of the regional daily newspaper or the

local television station does not guarantee that the issue will receive additional coverage after the initial news release or news conference. At this juncture the information lacks complexity. The active publics, by nature, will endeavor to find out more about the issue while the aware publics will ignore the issue if it does not directly relate to their specific needs (Van Leuven & Slater, 1991).

During the elaboration phase, newspapers play the greatest role in presenting the issue to the public. Unlike electronic media, newspapers have a greater ability to examine the complexities of the issue on economic, political, and sociological levels. Active publics more likely to read newspapers because they seek the depth of coverage afforded by this particular medium. In general, the active publics, already prone to take action without the incentive of mass media, use this information to strategize group action. The aware publics also monitor the newspaper, but primarily to determine whether action is in their better interests (Van Leuven & Slater, 1991).

In the understanding phase, for the first time latent publics begin to take notice of an issue. If the latent publics determine that the issue offers any relevance, they may begin to participate in group organizations. During this step, the media frame the information in terms of conflict between opposing sides and the cause and effect ramifications of the issue. Aware publics, wanting to understand the issue on a more complex level than latent publics, rely upon newspapers and magazines for most of their information. As a consequence, the aware publics use that information to determine their level of involvement. A by-product of the information aware publics glean from the newspapers is polltaking. Polltaking is a process in which those who consume mass

media judge public opinion not on direct experience, but on what they gather from those media outlets (Van Leuven & Slater, 1991).

In the attitude crystallization stage, the aware publics have the information foundation to make a decision in terms of what stance to take on the issue. The latent publics, with only a peripheral knowledge of the issue provided primarily through television or radio, may revert to using the cues from political affiliations, cues that may relate only tangentially to the issue. Television is the prime medium of information dispersal at this point. The issue takes on a more dramatic aspect. Complex aspects of the issue are reduced and simplified. Television, which relies on sound bites, tends to portray the issue as a clash of personalities (Van Leuven & Slater, 1991).

At this point, the proverbial line is now clearly drawn in the sand. The media have established an agenda and have relayed that agenda to the "political actors and publics" who consume their messages (Van Leuven & Slater, 1991, pp. 174-175).

Finally, in the readiness/action stage, those groups or individuals who perceive a vested interest in the issue will engage in media events to present their agenda while media observe and report (Van Leuven, & Slater, 1991).

For the community college, these steps in the development of public opinion may offer insight into what action needs to take place in order to achieve its desired results. Before a media campaign begins, how were issues relating to the institution covered? If one is trying to mobilize public opinion, what did the aware publics see in the newspaper that may have connected with their proclivity to act in a certain direction? Did the aware publics see anything that would link an issue to their needs and give them a sense of public opinion, connect with their needs, and encourage them to take action? If the level

of influence of agenda setting is determined in part by whether or not the consumers of the media's agenda find the issue relevant during the formation of public opinion, what action, if any, are important publics likely to take? What is the content of that agenda that may or may not influence action by key stakeholders? For the community college leader, these could be important questions.

In addition, channel variables play a significant role in the evolution of public opinion (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981). In the media ecology theory of information dissemination, the daily newspaper plays a key role in public awareness. According to Grunig's situational theory, newspapers play the primary role in presenting complex information to receivers (Van Leuven, & Slater, 1991). Newspapers are more of a factor in terms of setting the public agenda. Television has less of an influence upon public perception of the world. According to McCombs (1977), newspapers are a "prime mover of public opinion" because they "set the stage for public concern" (p. 92).

The printed word also holds certain advantages over video or audio in terms of how the receiver of the information processes that information. Readers of printed words engage in more complex cognitive efforts processing the information than those who receive information through radio or television (Pfau & Parrott, 1993). Newspapers are more substantive in their content and, as a result, influence learning on a deeper level (Pfau & Parrott, 1993). In terms of receivers analyzing complex material, persuasive effects are more potent when the information is presented in print as opposed to audio or video presentations (Chaiken & Eagly, 1976). Those who read newspapers tend to be more interested in politics (Pfau & Parrott, 1993).

Public opinion models place a great emphasis on the influence of groups or organizations in shaping public opinion. However, the media can pick and choose to whom they want to give voice. If one interest group is left out of the mass media dialogue concerning an issue, this can create in the public consciousness "images of coalitions of interest groups that, at times, only vaguely resemble reality" (Terkildsen, Schnell & Ling, 1998, p. 56). This reinforces the polltaking influence of the mass media, especially for those individuals who may not find the issue directly salient to their needs. "Policy solutions do not necessarily address salient problems; those most invested in the policy may get diverted to other issues; and interest in the policy may not coincide with an opportunity to enact it" (White, 1994, p. 515).

Ultimately, what Lippmann (1921) referred to as "the pictures in our heads" (p. 21), created by the media, may be more a result of "journalists' values and media norms" than of interest groups or public debate outside the realm of the media (Terkildsen, Schnell & Ling, 1998, p. 49).

Fairness, Balance, and Framing: Measuring the Agenda

Fairness and Balance

If mass media set the agenda and influence public opinion based on the amount of coverage a subject receives, then an analysis of the number, size, or placement of stories on a given topic could yield useful data for analysis. However, is there anything within the content of the messages that can further influence the attitudes of the public? If the agenda lacks fairness or balance or is somehow a reflection of the subjective reality of those who report the news, then the inherent distortions of the mass media agenda alter the perceived reality of the mass media consumer. If the lens of a camera is covered with

a yellow filter, then the developed photographs also will be yellow. If that photograph is our only reference to a reality we cannot experience directly, then we may have no way of knowing the actual colors of that reality.

Are journalists objective when they report the news? Journalists have long abandoned the concept of objectivity and have adopted the standards of fairness and balance: "Fairness usually means the simple inclusion of the other side of the story about conflict. Balance concerns how equally sides of a conflict are treated relative to one another" (Fico & Cote, 1998, p. 5).

Studies have indicated that stories concerning conflict may not always be balanced (Fico & Cote, 1998). Certain topics have not always been fairly covered by media, including the Persian Gulf War and abortion. Additionally, fairness and balance may be influenced based on the status of the people being covered. In local election coverage, status does appear to influence balance. The incumbent tends to be portrayed in terms of strengths and the challenger in terms of weaknesses (Fico & Cote, 1998).

Whom the reporters use as sources is often a balance between their own perspectives concerning the story and the pressures from the news organizations for whom they work. In a study of a number of large U.S. newspapers, Powers and Fico (1997) discovered that in some cases-stories focusing on legal issues-some newspapers tended to print imbalanced stories with verification from only one, often anonymous source. The result were stories that were imbalanced and that tended to give the impression to the readers of a distorted perspective.

According to Gans (1980), objectivity is a result of journalists focusing on "facts (or attributed opinions)" (p. 183). Those attributed opinions, or what sources are quoted

in the story, are, in large part, a measurement of the fairness and balance of the story: "News, ultimately, is what sources tell reporters" (Fico & Cote, 1998, p. 2). Therefore, fairness and balance, in part, can be measured in terms of who is cited in a story, how often they are cited, and where their quotes appear in the story. Who is selected as a source and where those statements are placed in the story can have a profound influence in terms of the perceived significance of one point of view versus another. As a result of this selection process, the amount and direction of information can influence the perceptions of the community served and the outcomes of matters of public interest (Taylor, Lee & Davie, 2000).

When news coverage in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* of political movements in South Korea and the People's Republic of China were analyzed in terms of the use of sources, it was discovered that the tone of the articles tended to reflect U.S. government policy. The predominant sources of information in the South Korean pro-democracy movement came from the South Korean government whereas stories focusing on the Chinese pro-democracy movement relied upon students and demonstrators. The result was that the pro-democracy movement could be perceived as more positive in the case of China and negative in the case of South Korea (Kim, 2000).

In their study of the coverage of the governor's race in Michigan, Fico and Cote (1998) found that 14 percent of the 214 stories were both fair and balanced, but fewer than 20 percent of the stories were completely one-sided or unfair. Overall, it was the incumbent candidate who fared better in the stories.

Why do incumbents hold an advantage in the political arena? Why are they quoted more often? According to Herbert Gans (1980), "The news deals mostly with

those who hold power within various national or societal strata; with the most powerful officials in the most powerful agencies;...." (pp, 61-62). Included in that list of powerful agencies that media focus on are "quality universities" (p. 61).

Could the four-year university, with its status and history, be analogous to the incumbent, with the community college as the challenger? If the goal of this study was to compare articles where both community colleges and four-year universities are covered, would the information be presented in a balanced and fair manner?

Framing

Mass media influence is not just a matter of how many stories are written or produced on a given subject, but also how the story is written (Terkilsen, Schnell & Ling, 1998). If mass media set the agenda of the world around us by focusing on certain issues, thereby making some issues appear to be more important than others, the effect may not be entirely quantitative in nature. "The second order of agenda setting" relates to the theory of framing (Hallahan, 1999, 213).

Burke (1989) contended that "man is a symbol making, symbol using, symbol abusing animal" (p. 60), and the theory of framing builds upon this concept. When reporters write a story, they rely upon symbols or cues imbedded in their memories and provided by their sources that help influence not only what they see, but what they report as well. These frames are then passed on to the media consumer.

Frames bring order to abstract concepts by using a reporter's stored phrases and images. Through frames, a reporter pulls out a familiar symbol or cue to describe an event. Is someone who engages in revolutionary acts against her or his government a freedom fighter or a traitor? The answer may depend upon the experiences and cultural

values of the reporter. "Frames can be influenced by the dominant norms and values of the audience in the wider political culture…political minorities challenging the dominant culture are most likely to prove critical of the way they are portrayed. Journalists, readers, and political scientists may view frames as 'just common sense'" (Norris, 1996, p. 5).

In a study of European politics, Semetko and Valenburg (2000) identified five common frames: conflict, human interest, responsibility, economic consequences, and morality.

The conflict frame is based on a tendency for reporters and journalists to reduce complex issues, such as a presidential campaign, to conflict metaphors such as a horse race or even a war. The media consumer will tend to find more conflict stories than any of the other frames.

The second most common frame is human interest. Stories and media events within the human interest frame tend to be focused on the human face, an emotional angle, or personalities in the news. Mass media outlets are always interested in finding human interest stories because they are very popular with mass media consumers.

In the responsibility frame, the stories tend to focus on issues or problems. An integral part of this frame is that the problems must be clearly attributed to an individual, group or government. There is usually a dénouement associated with the problem in terms of how to better resolve the problem.

Stories that fit the economic consequences frame focuses on how monetary affairs affect an individual, group, institution, region, or country. The wider impact of the event translates to a wider news value.

The morality frame is an examination of events within the parameters of religious tenets or moral prescriptions. In these stories, a group or organization raises the moral issue for the rest of the community to examine based on certain social prescriptions of how to behave.

Where the university may be framed in terms of ivy-covered architecture, research, scholarly students, and years of traditions, the community college might be viewed more negatively in terms of open enrollment, remediation, and technical training (Sims, 1997). The community college, not having the history of the university, may not have the credibility to be framed in ways other than negative stereotypes. If something is not perceived as salient, then the tendency is to avoid in-depth cognitive effort and to rely on peripheral cues such as stereotypes.

Frames have the tendency to be enduring. Mass media in the United States may frame events against a backdrop of certain values: "Ethnocentrism, altruistic democracy, responsible capitalism, small-town pastoralism, individualism, moderatism, social order, and national leadership" (Gans, 1980, p. 42). Media "portraits of the world represent the perspective of the dominant economic class and the dominant race and gender in the United States" (Lenart & Targ, 1992, p. 352). For the community college, whose mission does not always address the educational needs of those who dominate our society and thereby falls outside the realm of traditional American values, what are the chances it will be framed differently from the four-year university?

Frames are defined through language. Elements of a news frame include "keywords, metaphors, concepts, symbols, and visual images" (Entman, 1991, p. 7). Combining the language of frames with the ethnocentrism of frames can be used by mass

media to distort reality. An example of the combination of ethnocentrism and language used to frame reality can be found in the portrayal of two tragic airline incidents: the downing of a Korean Airlines 747 by Soviet pilots and the downing of an Iran Air 747 by an American destroyer. With all of the jingoism, ethnocentricity, and international rhetoric removed, both incidents are remarkably similar. Tragic miscalculations by both sides led to a high number of civilian deaths. However, an examination of the way both stories were framed in the American mass media demonstrated that the tragedies were not covered equally.

When describing the downing of a Korean Airlines 747 by the Soviet Union, the American media described the incident with words such as "atrocity, crime, kill, massacre, and murder" (Entman, 1991, p. 7). Conversely, when the United States shot down an Iranian airliner the terminology used to describe the incident included "accident, blunder, and mistake" (p. 7).

If mass media framing of community colleges were compared to the four-year universities, what would be revealed? Would the language used to frame the community college be more akin to Microsoft's CEO Bill Gates' description in terms of its "important role to play in making certain we have skilled workers ready to help businesses take advantage of all the opportunities in the Digital Age" (American Association of Community Colleges, 2001, p. 1)? Or do the mass media tend to frame community colleges using language more along the lines of disc jockey Howard Stern, who described them as "high schools with ash trays" (Sims, 1997)?

Mass media can also "shrink an event, make it less prominent, reduce prominence, duration of coverage... reduce mass awareness" (Entman, 1991, pp. 9-10).

In the case of Korean Airlines versus Iranian Airlines, the Korean tragedy received twice as much coverage based on word count as opposed to the Iranian tragedy (Entman, 1991, p. 19): "If both events were tragedies, KAL was configured as a larger, more important misfortune… ." (p. 10). More media attention translates to more audience contact with an event. News events are more likely to be perceived as important depending upon the amount of coverage they receive.

This is not to say that the tragedies associated with the loss of civilian life are equivalent to policy and economic issues associated with higher education. However, the studies do indicate that mass media have biases that manifest themselves through frames.

The influence of framing, like agenda setting, is also more powerful when the salience of the issue is low for the receiver. Once again, the implications for community college leaders and public relations practitioners lie in the possibility that for those for whom the community college is not in the forefront of priorities, negatively framed stories may have a profound effect on their perceptions.

The agenda-setting, priming, and framing capacity of the media influences opinion at either the individual level or collective level, and the repercussions for those who rely upon public opinion for their survival are enormous. In addition, with the volatility of issues being an influence on the agenda-setting capacity of the media, the sustainability of interest regarding a particular issue seems particularly limited. If in the interest of a community college's image one were to track issues related to the institution versus a competing educational institution such as a neighboring university, what would be the breakdown in terms of the amount of overall coverage and specific issues over that period of time? Those who monitor the public image of the community college need to

track media portrayal of community colleges over time and compare those portrayals with those of institutions such as universities that compete for limited public funds.

The public relations practitioner working for the community college may wish to understand the processes by which information becomes news. How does a story develop? What elements, human and otherwise, influence that development?

Studies of the Image of Education in the Media

Although mass media content analyses have been conducted for many decades examining many topics, the empirical study of the image of higher education has been rather limited. In 1976 Sicking and Harris completed a content analysis of the Metropolitan Community Colleges in Kansas City in two Kansas City newspapers, and in 1997 Devitt conducted a content analysis of four nationally recognized newspapers. The studies provide information in terms of number of stories in a given year, categories of stories, how stories are framed, and the use of sources.

A 1976 study of the coverage of the Metropolitan Community Colleges of Kansas City examined how the institutions were covered in the *Kansas City Star* and the *Kansas City Times* in 1965 and 1975 (Sicking & Harris, 1976). The significance of the two years selected for study was that in each year, voters were asked to vote on bond issues for the purpose of raising revenues for the community college system in Kansas City. The bond issue passed in 1965 but failed to pass in 1975.

The analysis examined the total number of stories focusing on Metropolitan Community College, the total number of stories per month, an analysis of the content of the headlines and the lead paragraphs, average comparison of column inches, where the story fit within a certain classification (news story, feature coverage-institutional nature,

feature coverage-human nature, editorial content, notice value), and value judgment
(subjective evaluation from excellent to poor of the image of the college).

In 1965 there were 114 stories focusing on Metropolitan Community College and
73 in 1975. *News* was the predominate classification in both years. The largest drop in
classification was in both *institutional* and *individual human interest* stories. *Value
judgment* (5 was an excellent rating and 1 was a poor rating) changed from a 3.98 in 1965
to a 3.39 average in 1975. The average number of column inches average was 2.72 in
1965 and 2.36 in 1975. Headline ratings (5 was a positive rating and 1 a negative rating)
changed from a 3.33 average in 1965 to a 3.25 in 1975.

A 1998 study was conducted examining the coverage of higher education in four
leading, nationally recognized newspapers: *The New York Times, The Washington Post,
The Wall Street Journal,* and *USA Today* (Devitt). A total of 610 stories were analyzed.
The analysis examined three aspects: frames, topics, and sources.

The analysis of the stories was based on five frames: *Conflict, consensus, failure,
success,* and *other*. In the *conflict* frame, the headlines and leads emphasized
disagreement between parties. In the *consensus* frame, the headlines and leads
emphasized praise or agreement for toward party over another. In the *failure* frame, the
headlines and leads emphasized shortcomings of an individual or individuals, institution,
or policy. In the *success* frame, the headlines and leads emphasized the accomplishments
of an individual or individuals, institution, or policy. In the *other* frame the headlines and
leads "are best described as neutral" (Devitt, 1998, p. 5). Evaluations of the news frames
were based on the information or tone established in either the headline or lead
paragraph. The results of the study indicated that most of the stories fell within the *other*

frame: 59.4%. The *conflict* frame had the second highest total of stories: 31.9%. The last three frames broke down in the following order: <u>success,</u> 5.2%; <u>failure,</u> 3.3%; <u>consensus,</u> 0.2%.

In addition to news frames, there was also a content analysis based on twenty-one topics. The top ten topics were selected and analyzed in terms of what frame they fit in to and the types of sources that were cited within the stories. The eleven topics that appearedoccurred most often, in order of frequency, were c*ampus management, financial aid, crime/tragedies, military academies, affirmative action, other (topics included dormitory living, non-traditional students, and commencement), costs, campus performance, government relations, job market,* and *research.* The last four topics had an equal number of stories.

Finally, the study analyzed the eight most frequent sources the newspapers used for information: *campus administrators, advocacy groups, experts, faculty, presidents/chancellors, professional (e.g. lawyers and business persons), public officials,* and *students.* Nine hundred thirty-eight sources were cited overall within the stories analyzed. Administrators were the most frequently cited, followed by public officials, advocacy groups, presidents/chancellors, students, professionals, experts, and faculty (Devitt, 1998, p. 6-7).

It is difficult to compare the two studies and draw any sort of unified conclusion in terms of how higher education is presented in the mass media. First, there are the differences in the time frames of the two studies. Second, the Devitt (1998) study examined national newspapers whereas the Sicking and Harris (1976) study focused on local newspapers. Third, the categories and frames do not match. Finally, the Devitt

study focused generally on higher education without mentioning if the stories pertained specifically to community colleges, private colleges, and universities or public four-year colleges and universities.

The challenge for future research would be to design a study that compares the coverage of both community colleges and four-year institutions over the same period of time, using similar categories, similar frames, and use of sources. Both the Sicking and Harris (1976) study and the Devitt (1998) study provide a basis for developing a template for the development of frames, categories, and use of sources that could be applied to a study that compares both community colleges and four-year universities over the same period of time.

Content Analysis

Although the Sicking and Harris (1976) study and the Devitt (1998) study have differences in the design of their studies, in both instances the research method of content analysis was employed. The process of content analysis has been a method of scholarly inquiry that has provided insights since early in the twentieth century.

Content analyses were instrumental in the development of the research on agenda setting (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), priming (Willnat & Zhu, 1996), and fairness and balance (Fico & Cote, 1998). Through content analysis scholars have examined mass media in terms of the use of language in editorials, photos of African Americans in periodicals, and the portrayal of terrorism in the 1980s (Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 1998). An examination of newspaper coverage through content analysis has yielded significant insights regarding such diverse topics including health care (Walsh-Childers, Chance, &

Swain, 1999), the portrayal of American cities (Artwick & Gordon, 1998), and the analysis of social change (Danielson, & Lasorsa, 1997).

Although criticized in the 1980s as being too reductionist, content analysis has not outlived its usefulness in a postmodern era. Content analysis is an analytical procedure that allows the researcher to count data in terms of frequency and distribution. It is fundamentally objective in that the researcher reveals the "basis for sampling and analytical choices" on which "readers can assess the study's validity" (Thomas, 1994, p. 696). Content analysis is a versatile technique in that it can "cover what other techniques can cover but is limited to the rules of evidence" (Thomas, 1994, p. 696).

Content analysis is a *communications audit*. According to Grunig (1977), one of the leading scholars in the area of public relations research, a content analysis can be an effective measurement of public relations. This is critical because it is through public relations that community colleges can create a better image in mass media outlets and thereby an improved public perception (Cohen, 2000). Unless an organization can influence the media and thereby influence how it is presented to the public, then studying agenda setting, priming, framing, fairness, and balance is an exercise in futility. If one cannot influence the content of mass media agenda, then what purpose does it serve to analyze the content of the mass media? Studies in the area of agenda building seem to indicate that organizations can indeed influence the agenda of the mass media.

Agenda Building: What You Want the Public to Know?

Do mass media set the agenda? The empirical evidence based upon years of studies indicates that there is a positive connection between what is presented in the mass media and what the media-consuming public believes to be important. The agenda,

based on studies of framing along with fairness and balance, is not consistently without some bias. In addition, certain groups hold advantages in terms of how they are portrayed in the mass media.

Can an organization influence the media and alter the agenda? Based upon studies of political groups, including the Christian Coalition, as well as corporate entities such as the large pharmaceutical corporations, there appears to be evidence that the agenda can be altered (Huckins, 1999; Gosden & Beder, 2001).

Agenda building can fit within one of three models. In the *outside-initiative model* citizen organizations coalesce around an issue, then endeavor to use media outlets to relay their message to the population as whole in order to pressure governments to take action. A second approach to agenda building is the *mobilization* or *inside-initiative model*. Unlike the outside-initiative model, where the forces outside governments try to influence the agenda, in this model an agency within a government endeavors to use the media to put forth its agenda. The third model, the *inside-access model*, bypasses public input altogether. In societies where wealth and power exist among the few, agencies or narrow special interest groups with access to the power elites can avoid public debate completely in order to influence the formulation of public policy (Kamieniecki, 1991).

One of the underlying factors that have influenced forces outside the inner circles of the mass media hierarchy to affect the agenda is economics. The news media, in an effort to cut costs and increase profits, have increased the use of "information subsidies" for sources of information (Curtin, 1999). Therefore, political groups, using public relations campaigns, can provide the news media with a means obtain information economically.

Reporting of government function in terms of public administration has declined over the years. For television news, with its emphasis on "drama, emotion, and spectacle," the prospect of in-depth coverage of public policy issues outside these frames holds little appeal (Lee, 1999, p. 452). When mass media report on political events there is a tendency to frame stories as either "thematic or episodic" (Smith, McCarthey, McPhail et al., 2001). Thematic coverage tends to be more complex, focusing on the subtleties of an issue, whereas episodic coverage tends to be more simplistic with an emphasis on the obvious. Television news focuses more on the simpler, episodic coverage.

In the past social and policy issues could be discussed and promoted through "social and civic institutions" (Lee, 1999, p. 456). However, both membership and influence have declined in these institutions over the years. As a result of this information vacuum, the mass media have become an even more significant conduit for the discussion of public policy issues. Therefore, a policy entrepreneur must be "effective at interacting with the media at the definition-setting stage of media coverage: What is a problem that deserves media (and, therefore, public and governmental) attention? How will the 'problem' be defined" (Lee, 1999, p. 456)?

Large corporations, in order to promote their agenda, are increasingly creating *advocacy coalitions*. An advocacy coalition is sometimes referred to as a front group. On the surface, this front group appears to consist of citizens and experts in the field who purport that they have come together to promote an issue in the public interest. However, the advocacy coalition is not some type of grass roots organization formed almost

spontaneously around an issue or cause. In fact, it is a creation of public relations organizations in concert with large corporations (Gosden & Beder, 2001).

The aim of these organizations is to influence public policy by precisely targeting key elements of the public, government, and the media. The large pharmaceutical company Eli Lilly, wanting to promote a new drug for the treatment of schizophrenia, used a series of advocacy coalitions toward this goal. Through front groups such as the Treatment Advocacy Center, the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, and the World Psychiatric Association, Eli Lilly processed its agenda to the mass media and government. The message was clear: schizophrenics, properly treated, should not be deemed as social pariahs. However, when left untreated, schizophrenics presented a menace to society. According to the information coming out of the advocacy centers sponsored by Eli Lilly, with the proper medication, schizophrenics were less likely to engage in dangerous anti-social behavior. The campaign help create a positive spin for Eli Lilly's new drug, resulting in faster federal approval of the drug, greater acceptance of the drug by the medical community, and multi-billion dollar profits for the corporation (Gosden & Beder, 2001).

In 1992, after George Bush lost the presidential election to Bill Clinton, a number of Republicans blamed the loss, in part, on the negative effect of the Christian Coalition. Bush's association with a group that was perceived in the mass media as being ultraconservative, with an agenda that ran counter to the interests of mainstream Americans, seemed to hurt the incumbent president. The image of the coalition was a result of the media focusing on certain issues within its "rhetoric of family values" (Huckins, 1999, p. 78). This rhetoric, embedded in news stories often ran contrary to

public opinion. In 1992 the stories in the secular press focused on the coalition's stance

on abortion, gay rights, and censorship. Two years later, stories in the secular media,

about the coalition focused on topics more politically friendly with mainstream America,

including education, health care, civil/personal rights, and taxation (Huckins, 1999). This

change in the perceived agenda was the result of a strong public relations effort that

included developing friendlier relations with journalists, avoiding religious symbolism in

its rhetoric, coordinating efforts with non-Christian groups, and making certain that

stories in the Christian Coalition's official newspaper, *Christian American*, reflected the

new agenda-building strategy. The results of this public relations/agenda building

campaign were successful in altering the image of the Christian Coalition in the secular

media (Huckins, 1999).

Summary

It is against this backdrop that community colleges must compete for attention in

mass media. It is not just a matter of coping with the intricacies of the mass media

infrastructure that a community college leader must consider when endeavoring to

present the best face of the institution to the public through mass media outlets. Also

factored into the equation of the construction of the mass media agenda are the powerful

influences of outside organizations.

What advantages do universities, with their traditions, histories, and distinguished

alumni, have in terms of their ability to set their agenda? Before this can be addressed, it

will be necessary to ascertain if differences exist in terms how much coverage four-year

public universities receive versus community colleges. In addition, will there be

differences in terms of the content of the coverage? If there are significant differences

and the community college suffers in comparison to the four-year university, then community college leaders will have a starting point to begin their strategies to develop strategies to adjust mass media agenda.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

The general goal of this study was to compare the coverage of Florida state universities and community colleges in major metropolitan newspapers. The more specific goal of the study was to compare the coverage of community colleges within the reading areas covered by major metropolitan newspapers to the nearest four-year state university. In addition, the two flagship universities, University of Florida and Florida State University, were also analyzed in terms of the amount and content of the coverage they received versus that of the community colleges and the four-year universities in the cities served by the major metropolitan newspaper.

Research Questions

Specifically this study addressed the following questions:

1. Is there a difference in the total numbers of stories in a given year for community colleges, the neighboring four-year state university, and the flagship universities?

2. Is there a difference in the number of times the community college, the neighboring four-year university, and the flagship universities appear in certain sections of the newspaper?

3. Is there a difference in terms of the way the stories are framed when comparing the community college, the neighboring four-year university, and the flagship universities?

4. Is there a difference in terms of the topics that the stories fall within when comparing the community college, the neighboring four-year university, and the flagship universities?

5. Is there a difference in terms of the use of quoted sources in the stories when comparing the community college, the neighboring four-year university, and the flagship universities?

Sampling and Coding

To test for the amount of coverage received by community colleges versus the amount received by neighboring four-year universities and the flagship universities received in local major metropolitan newspapers a content analysis was conducted. Newspapers were chosen as the focus of the content analysis based on studies of the public opinion models and evidence that newspapers were a more important medium for the processing of complex information (Pfau & Parrott, 1993) and were more persuasive than audio or visual media (Chaiken & Eagly, 1976), and that those who read newspapers tend to be more interested in politics (Pfau & Parrott, 1993). In addition, major metropolitan newspapers were chosen for analysis because of their role in the agenda setting process (Van Leuven & Slater, 1991). A further consideration was given to newspapers in that the only known content analyses focusing on education examined newspaper coverage (Sicking & Harris, 1976; Devitt, 1998).

According to the *American Journalism Review*, there are seven major metropolitan newspapers in Florida: *Florida-Times Union Jacksonville, Ft. Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel, Miami Herald, Orlando Sentinel, Palm Beach Post, St. Petersburg Times,* and *Tampa Tribune*.

The following major metropolitan newspapers have a state university within the city in which they are located: *Florida-Times Union* Jacksonville, University of North Florida; *Miami Herald*, Florida International University; *Orlando Sentinel*, University of Central Florida; and *Tampa Tribune*, University of South Florida.

The next consideration was the means by which articles could be searched and identified in each newspaper. The following is the list of the four metropolitan

newspapers considered for the study and the data bases that can be used to reference articles in those newspapers: *Florida-Times Union* Jacksonville, Infotrac Custom Newspapers; *Miami Herald*, Lexis-Nexis (Not available after 1999); *Orlando Sentinel*, NewsBank; *Tampa Tribune*, Infotrac Custom Newspapers and Lexis-Nexis.

For validity purposes, it was agreed that only one search engine would be used to compare articles. Infotrac Custom Newspapers was useful in that it allowed for two newspapers to be used for the study. Therefore, the study would use the *Florida-Times Union* (Jacksonville) and the *Tampa Tribune*.

The time frame of the articles that were analyzed was July 1, 2000, to June 30, 2003. The purpose was to choose dates that fit within fiscal years rather than a calendar year because of the nature of the schedules of higher education.

The four-year universities chosen for analysis were those within the city limits of the metropolitan newspapers selected for analysis: the University of North Florida in the *Florida Times Union* and the University of South Florida in the *Tampa Tribune*.

The community colleges selected for analysis had to be within the reading area of each selected metropolitan newspaper. The community colleges neighboring the universities and within the reading areas included Florida Community College at Jacksonville and St. Johns River Community College for the *Florida-Times Union*. For the *Tampa Tribune* the community colleges chosen for analysis were Hillsborough Community College and Pasco-Hernando Community College.

In addition, both in the *Tampa Tribune* and the *Florida Times Union*, an article search was performed for both the University of Florida and Florida State University.

Infotrac enables one to search by the following categories: news, business news, sports, arts and entertainment, regional news and opinion-editorial. Infotrac also provides the number of words in an article.

The articles under analysis were limited to news, regional news, business, and opinion-editorial. Stories had to be 500 or more words and either the name or the initials of the institutions had to appear in the headline or the lead paragraph.

A keyword search was used in each of the four categories using the name of the educational institution. A total of 474 articles were found that fit within the parameters of the search.

Based on Devitt's (1998) analysis of the coverage of education *The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal,* and *USA Today,* the coders examined the articles in the two Florida major metropolitan newspapers on the basis of frames, topics, and sources.

The analysis of the stories was based on five frames: conflict, consensus, failure, success, and other. In the conflict frame, the headlines and leads emphasized disagreement between parties. In the consensus frame, the headlines and leads emphasized praise or agreement for one party to another. In the failure frame, the headlines and leads emphasized shortcomings of an individual or individuals, institution, or policy. In the success frame, the headlines and leads emphasized the accomplishments of an individual or individuals, institution, or policy. In the other frame, the headlines and leads are best described as neutral. Determining the news frames was based on the information or tone established in either the headline or lead paragraph. For example, in the conflict frame the headlines and leads emphasized disagreement between parties. The

frame included either criticism by one party of another (e.g., a faculty member criticizing an administrator).

In addition to news frames, the articles were also analyzed based on twenty topics drawn from the Devitt (1998) study: admissions/applications, affirmative action, campus groups, campus management, campus performance, costs/price, crime/tragedies, curriculum, faculty issues, government relations, financial aid, fund raising, job market, international, rankings, research, tenure, town relations, testing/standards, and other.

Two categories were added to the study: event/location and Sami Al-Arian. The category of event/location arose from pre-testing sessions. The coders noted that there were stories concerning events on campus. These events might either be a campus event associated with the institution such as a play or an art exhibit. In other articles, the event referred to might not be associated with the institution, such as a youth basketball league using campus facilities.

Sami Al-Arian was a professor of computer sciences who worked for the University of South Florida. Al-Arian came to national prominence after the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001. Al-Arian during an appearance on a nationally broadcast television news program where he expressed his support of the terrorists. It was also discovered that his work with Arab charities was linked to the support of terrorist organizations. Al-Arian eventually was fired by USF in 2003, but not without a struggle between faculty organizations and university administrators. Because of the unique nature of this subject, particularly based on its historic context, it was determined to place Al-Arian stories in their own category

as opposed to placing them in campus administration category where stories involving personnel issues would fall.

The final aspect that the coders analyzed was who was quoted in an article. Once again drawing from the Devitt (1998) study, the sources were categorized as one of the following: campus administrators, advocacy groups, faculty, presidents/chancellors, professional (e.g. lawyers and business persons), public officials, and students.

In the Devitt (1998) study there were two separate categories for faculty. The "expert" category referred to faculty who were cited for their expertise in research issues. The "faculty" category was used when individuals were referred to in the context of their teaching duties. During pre-coding exercises, the coders expressed their concern that to distinguish between the two was difficult depending upon how the article was written. As a result, it was decided that all faculty citations would be coded as "faculty" exclusively.

During pre-testing sessions, the coders noted that newspapers would cite a "spokesperson" for a quotation without specifying a name or position within the institution. It was decided that "staff" would be added to the list of possible sources. A source that was designated as "staff" had to work for the institution and not fall under the categories of campus administrators, faculty, or presidents/chancellor. For example, a staff member could be a spokesperson, a security guard, or an administrative assistant.

In the Devitt (1998) study, the coding of the frames and topics was based on an analysis of the headline and lead. If the lead and headline did not appear to match, whatever the lead stated took precedence over the headline. However, during pre-coding, the coders discovered that the tone of the frames in particular were often very different

between the headlines and leads. This was particularly apparent in stories from the *Florida Times Union*. It was then agreed upon that both frame and topic would be coded separately for headlines and leads.

Once the articles for coding had been identified, printed copies were given to two coders. At random, each coder was given one half of the total number of articles. In addition, for intercoder reliability purposes, fifteen percent of the articles were chosen at random and given to all coders to code (Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 1998). The intercoder stories were divided equally between both newspapers. Holsti's reliability test was used to determine statistically intercoder agreement (Wimmer & Dominick, 1987, p. 183). The results of the intercoder test are as follows: Frame headline 86%, frame lead 84%, topic headline 93%, topic lead 92%, and sources 94%.

Statistical Procedures

The study yielded four sets of nominal data, section, topics, frames, and sources. Because the analysis was quantitative in nature and the newspaper data base provided the entire population of articles for each category, it was not necessary to perform statistical analyses. Similar to the Devitt (1998) study, data were organized to indicate the frequencies of each set of data.

CHAPTER 4
RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Introduction

What follows is a breakdown of the number of articles written for each educational institution in the following areas. First, there is a series of charts that illustrate how many articles appeared in the studied newspapers by sections: news, regional, business, and opinion/editorial. For both the *Tampa Tribune* and *Florida Times Union*, there are charts that show the articles over the entire course of the three years studied and by individual fiscal years.

In addition, the coverage is also broken down in terms of the content of each article. The content was coded in terms of frames, topics, and the number and type of news sources that were referenced in each article.

Articles by Section

An examination of the *Tampa Tribune* over the three years studied indicates that the University of South Florida (USF) had a total of 222 articles, with 19 for Hillsborough Community College (HCC) and 16 for Pasco-Hernando Community College (PHCC), respectively (See Table 1).

It could be argued that in the case of the USF, the additional coverage could be linked to the Sami Al-Arian story. In the first fiscal year seventy-one articles appeared in the *Tampa Tribune* for USF. In 2001-2002, when the Al-Arian story first received national attention, there were 73 articles. In 2002-2003, when Arian was fired by USF, there were a total of 78 articles.

In the *Florida Times Union*, the University of North Florida (UNF) had a total of 123 articles while Florida Community College at Jacksonville (FCCJ) had 43, and St. Johns River Community College (SRCC) had 8. Even if the number of articles for each of the respective colleges in each of the newspapers was combined, it does not match the coverage of the neighboring four-year institution (See Table 2).

A specific examination of the breakdown of the "news" section of each newspaper indicates that both USF and UNF clearly outdistance their neighboring community colleges (See Tables 1 and 2). For USF, 62 stories appeared in the "news" section as compared to 2 articles for Hillsborough Community College and 0 for Pasco-Hernando Community College. In the case of UNF, 35 articles appeared in the "news" section neither Florida Community College at Jacksonville nor St. Johns Community College had any articles in the "news" section.

Also, the large research institutions, the University of Florida (UF) and Florida State University (FSU), received equal, or in most cases, more coverage in the "news" section than the community colleges. In the *Tampa Tribune*, UF had 2 "news" articles and FSU had 5. HCC and PHCC had a combined total of 2 "news" articles (See Table 1). In the *Florida Times Union*, the difference was even more apparent. FCCJ and SJRCC did not have any articles in the "news" section, but UF had ten and FSU had three (See Table 2).

The examination of the total number of stories for a given institution showed that there was a great deal more coverage of the universities compared to their neighboring community colleges. Conversely, the content of each article seems to indicate that,

overall, there is far less disparity between the four-year universities and the community

colleges. Three elements were examined: frames, topics, and sources.

Table 1
Summary of articles with 500 or more words, name of the institution appears in the
headline, lead paragraph, or both
Tampa Tribune: July 1, 2000- June 30, 2003

	News	Regional	Business	Op-Ed
USF	62(16/20/26)	138(48/49/41)	7(1/2/4)	15(6/2/7)
UF	2(4/0/0)	6(3/3/0)	3(0/1/2)	2(2/0/0)
FSU	5(0/1/4)	1(1/0/0)	0(0/0/0)	0(0/0/0)
HCC	2(1/1/0)	17(6/6/5)	0(0/0/0)	0(0/0/0)
PHCC	0(0/0/0)	14(7/2/5)	0(0/0/0)	2(2/0/0)
	71(21/22/30)	176(65/60/51)	10(1/3/6)	19(10/2/7)

Note. Numbers in parentheses indicate number of articles per fiscal year: 2000-
2001/2001-2002/2002-2003

Table 2
Summary of articles with 500 or more words, name of the institution appears in the
headline, lead paragraph, or both
Florida Times Union: July 1, 2000- June 30, 2003

	News	Regional	Business	Op-Ed
UNF	35(10/9/16)	74(26/18/30)	14(8/4/2)	0(0/0/0)
UF	10(2/6/2)	2(0/0/2)	3(2/1/0)	0(0/0/0)
FSU	3(1/1/1)	9(4/1/4)	0(0/0/0)	0(0/0/0)
FCCJ	0(0/0/0)	37(8/18/11)	6(3/1/2)	0(0/0/0)
SJRCC	0(0/0/0)	8(1/3/4)	0(0/0/0)	0(0/0/0)
	48(13/16/19)	130(39/40/51)	23(13/6/4)	0(0/0/0)

Note. Numbers in parentheses indicate number of articles per fiscal year: 2000
2001/2001-2002/2002-2003

Frames

The percentages for all of the stories examined in the study broke down as follows: consensus less than 1% for the headline, 2% for the lead; conflict 12% for the headline, 11% for the lead; failure 13% for the headline and 12% for the lead; success 23% for the headline, 20% for the lead; and other 52% for the headline and 54% for the lead.

When examining the numbers of the conflict frames, USF had a particularly higher ratio, especially compared to HCC and UNF. This could be attributed to, in part, to the stories concerning Sami Al-Arian (See Table 3 and 4). The Al-Arian topics accounted for 37% of the conflict frames for USF. If the Al-Arian stories are factored out of the USF results, the combined total of conflict frames in headlines and leads of conflict frames drop from 16% to 11%, which puts the numbers more in line with the other institutions.

Overall, the rank order of frames from institution to institution remained consistent (See Table 5). For all of the institutions, the other frame was ranked first. The success frame ranked second for all institutions with the exception of USF, where it was tied with the conflict frame for second. The consensus frame ranked fifth for all of the institutions with the exception of SJRCC, where it was tied for fourth with the failure frame. Failure and conflict frames were equally divided between third and fourth place among the institutions.

Table 3
Proportion of News Frame by Institution In Percentages: Headlines and Leads
Tampa Tribune: July 1, 2000-June 30, 2003

	Conflict	Consensus	Failure	Success	Other
	Head %/Lead %	Head %/Lead %	Head %/Lead %	Head %Lead %	Head %/Lead %
USF	16/16(67)	1>/3(8)	17/15(67)	17/16(69)	50/50(208)
UF	0/0(0)	0/1>(1)	1/1(4)	28/21(9)	61/63(23)
FSU	0/0(0)	0/20(1)	25/20(2)	75/60(6)	0/0(0)
HCC	0/11(2)	0/0(0)	0/5(1)	39/37(14)	61/47(20)
PHCC	15/0(2)	0/0(0)	23/21(6)	38/21(8)	38/57(13)
	13/13(71)	1>/3(10)	15/14(80)	22/20(106)	49/50(264)

Note: Numbers in parentheses indicate the combined total of headlines and leads

Table 4
Proportion of News Frame by Institution In Percentages: Headlines and Leads
Florida Times Union: July 1, 2000-June 30, 2003

	Conflict	Consensus	Failure	Success	Other
	Head %/Lead %	Head %/Lead %	Head %/Lead %	Head/ %Lead %	Head %/Lead %
UNF	8/6(16)	1>/2(3)	11/12(25)	24/21(49)	56/58(123)
UF	17/0(2)	0/0(0)	17/1(3)	17/2(4)	50/70(13)
FSU	8/17(3)	0/0(0)	0/0(0)	8/17(3)	83/67(18)
FCCJ	8/8(6)	0/0(0)	3/0(1)	39/32(27)	50/61(42)
SJRCC	13/0(1)	0/0(0)	0/0(0)	38/43(6)	50/57(8)
	9/6(28)	1>/1(3)	8/6(29)	28/23(89)	55/64(204)

Note: Numbers in parentheses indicate the combined total of headlines and leads

Table 5
Rank order of News Frames by Institution In Percentages
July 1, 2000-June 30, 2003

USF	Other 50(208)	Success 16(69)	Conflict 16(67)	Failure 16(67)	Consensus 2(8)
HCC	Other 54(20)	Success 38(14)	Conflict 5(2)	Failure 3(1)	Consensus 0(0)
PHCC	Other 45(13)	Success 28(8)	Failure 21(6)	Conflict 7(2)	Consensus 0(0)
UNF	Other 57(123)	Success 23(49)	Failure 12(25)	Conflict 7(16)	Consensus 1(3)
FCCJ	Other 55(42)	Success 36(27)	Conflict 8(6)	Failure 1(1)	Consensus 0(0)
SJRCC	Other 57(8)	Success 43(6)	Conflict 7(1)	Consensus 0(0)	Failure 0(0)
UF*	Other 61(36)	Success 22(13)	Failure 12(7)	Conflict 3(2)	Consensus 2(1)
FSU*	Other 55(18)	Success 27(9)	Conflict 9(3)	Failure 6(2)	Consensus 3(1)

Note: Numbers in parentheses indicate the combined total of headlines and leads
*Percentages for UF and FSU are based on the combined totals for the *Tampa Tribune*
and the *Florida Times Union*

Topics

An examination of the topics in the *Tampa Tribune* indicates that among all of the

institutions studied, there were some similarities. If topics are by leads, as in the Devitt

(1998) study, "campus management" came in first for USF, followed by "other," "Al-

Arian," "research," and "event/location." For HCC "other" ranked first, followed by

"campus management" and "event/location," which were tied for second, then

"curriculum," and "town relations" (See Table 6).

There were some similarities in the topic rank order for PHCC as compared to

USF and HCC. For PHCC, "campus management" ranked first, with "other" tied for

second. However, PHCC differed from USF and HCC in that the

"admissions/application" topic placed higher overall when compared to the other

institutions. For PHCC, "admissions/applications" accounted for 17% of the leads;

however, for USF, this topic accounted for only 1% of the leads, and for HCC there were no leads related to admissions/applications. Three topics tied for fourth for PHCC: "curriculum" and "event/location," which were both prominent for HCC, as well as "campus performance," for which there were no leads for HCC.

For UF and FSU, the "other" topic placed prominently among their leads: first for UF and tied for second for FSU. For FSU, "campus management" was the most often coded topic, and for UF it ranked third. For UF, "research" ranked second overall, but there were no articles covering this topic for FSU.

A comparison of the topic distribution for the institutions covered by the *Florida Times Union* shows that the "other" topic was first for UNF, followed by "campus management," "event/location," "research." "Fund raising" and "curriculum" were tied for fifth (See Table 7).

For FCCJ, the "other" topic also ranked first, but it was tied with "curriculum." For UNF, "curriculum" ranked a distant fifth. Third, overall, was "campus management" which ranked second for UNF. Tied for fifth for FCCJ were "cost," "faculty issues," and "town relations." These topics did not rate as highly for UNF.

Because of the limited amount of coverage it received during the time period covered by this study, only three topics came up for SJRCC. They were, in rank order, "campus management," "other," and "curriculum." Although the overall numbers for SJRCC were small, all three of these topics also were ranked among the five highest for FCCJ.

Similar to the *Tampa Tribune*, in the *Florida Times Union*, the "other" topic placed prominently among the leads, for UF and FSU: first and tied for first respectively.

For FSU, "campus management" was tied for the most often coded topic, and for UF it was tied for third. Again, these results are very similar to those found in the *Tampa Tribune*. In the *Tampa Tribune*, "research" ranked second overall for UF; however, there were no articles covering this topic in the *Florida Times Union*. Neither had a research article for FSU.

Overall, there was some consistency in terms of topics covered across all of the institutions. However, it should be noted that SJRCC only had three topics overall for the entire time frame of the study (See Table 8).

The "other" and "campus management" topics were in the Top Five list for all institutions, along with being the lead topic for three. The "curriculum" topic made the Top Five list for all institutions with the exception of USF. However, the "Al-Arian" stories may have influenced this result. For USF, "curriculum" placed sixth overall.

"Event/location" was another topic that placed in the top five topics overall.

"Research" made the Top Five list for both UNF and USF and placed fourth overall for both institutions.

There were some similarities when comparing the breakdown of topics for UF and FSU in the *Tampa Tribune* and the *Florida Times Union*. However, there were some topics, such as "affirmative action" and "government relations," which were not among the five more cited topics in the other institutions in the study. However, in the case of the research universities, these topics ranked fifth overall.

Table 6

Proportion of News Topics by Institution In Percentages: Headlines and Leads

Tampa Tribune: July 1, 2000-June 30, 2003

Topic	Head %/Lead % USF	Head %/Lead % UF	Head %/Lead % FSU	Head %/Lead % HCC	Head %/Lead % PHCC
Adm/App	1/1(4)	0/6(10)	0/0(0)	0/0(0)	23/17(5)
Aff. Action	0/0(0)	0/0(0)	0/0(0)	0/0(0)	0/0(0)
Al-Arian	12/15(56)	0/0(0)	0/0(0)	0/0(0)	0/0(0)
Campus Groups	1/1(5)	0/0(0)	0/0(0)	0/0(0)	0/0(0)
Campus Man.	28/31(121)	13/12(4)	17/50(4)	20/20(8)	46/42(11)
Campus Perf.	1/1(4)	6/6(2)	0/0(0)	0/0(0)	0/8(1)
Crime	2/1(7)	6/6(2)	17/17(2)	0/0(0)	0/0(0)
Curriculum	2/1(7)	0/6(1)	0/0(0)	5/15(4)	8/8(2)
Event/Location	3/6(19)	0/0(0)	17/0(1)	30/20(10)	8/8(2)
Faculty Issues	1/1(5)	0/0(0)	0/0(0)	0/5(1)	0/0(0)
Fund Raising	1/1(6)	0/0(0)	0/0(0)	0/0(0)	0/0(0)
Gov't Relations	0/<1(1)	0/0(0)	0/17(1)	0/0(0)	0/0(0)
Other	34/27(127)	56/35(15)	33/17(3)	40/30(14)	15/17(4)
Research	11/11(46)	13/24(6)	0/0(0)	0/0(0)	0/0(0)
Town Relations	1/1(4)	6/6(2)	17/0(1)	5/10(3)	0/0(0)
	100/100(412)	100/100(42)	100/100(12)	100/100(40)	100/100(25)

Note: Numbers in parentheses indicate the combined total of headlines and leads

Table 7
Proportion of News Topics by Institution In Percentages: Headlines and Leads
Florida Times Union: July 1, 2000-June 30, 2003

Topic	UNF Head %/Lead %	UF Head %/Lead %	FSU Head %/Lead %	FCCJ Head %/Lead %	SJRCC Head %/Lead %
Adm/App	<1/2(3)	0/0(0)	8/17(0)	0/0(0)	0/0(0)
Aff. Action	<1/<1(2)	23/15(5)	0/0(0)	0/0(0)	0/0(0)
Al-Arian	0/0(0)	0/0(0)	0/0(0)	0/0(0)	0/0(0)
Campus Groups	2/<1(3)	0/0(0)	8/0(1)	0/0(0)	0/0(0)
Campus Man.	39/33(81)	8/8(2)	31/25(7)	25/20(18)	63/67(11)
Campus Perf.	0/0(0)	8/8(2)	8/0(1)	5/3(3)	0/0(0)
Cost	2/2(4)	0/0(0)	0/0(0)	5/5(4)	0/0(0)
Crime	0/0(0)	0/8(1)	0/0(0)	0/0(0)	0/0(0)
Curriculum	4/3(7)	8/15(3)	15/8(3)	20/25(18)	8/8(2)
Event/Location	12/12(27)	0/0(0)	8/8(2)	13/15(11)	0/0(0)
Faculty Issues	0/0(0)	0/0(0)	0/0(0)	0/5(1)	0/0(0)
Fund Raising	3/3(6)	0/0(0)	0/0(0)	0/0(0)	0/0(0)
Gov't Relations	<1/<1(2)	0/0(0)	8/8(2)	3/3(2)	0/0(0)
Other	31/37(77)	46/38(11)	23/25(6)	25/25(20)	38/22(5)
Research	5/4(11)	0/0(0)	0/0(0)	0/0(0)	0/0(0)
Town Relations	<1/2(3)	8/8(2)	0/0(0)	5/5(4)	0/0(0)
	100/100(226)	100/100(26)	100/100(22)	100/100(81)	100/100(18)

Note: Numbers in parentheses indicate the combined total of headlines and leads

Table 8
Rank order of Top 5 News Topics by Institution In Percentages
July 1, 2000-June 30, 2003

USF	Other 31(127)	Camp M 29(121)	Al-Arian 14(56)	Research 11(46)	Event 5(19)
HCC	Other 35(14)	Event 25(10)	Camp M 20(8)	Curric 10(4)	Town R. 8(3)
PHCC	Camp M 44(11)	Adm/App 20(5)	Other 16(4)	Curric.8(2)	Event 8(2)
UNF	Camp M 35(81)	Other34 (77)	Event 12(27)	Research 5(11)	Curric. 4(7)
FCCJ	Other 25(20)	Camp M 22(18)	Curric. 22(18)	Event 14(11)	Cost & Town R 5(4)
SJRCC*	Camp M 61(11)	Other 28(5)	Curric.11(2)		
UF**	Other 38(26)	Adm/App 19(13)	Camp M. 9(6)	Research 9(6)	Aff Action 7(5)
FSU**	Camp. M.32(11)	Other 26(9)	Curric. 9(3)	Event 9(3)	Gov't Rel. 9(3)

Note: Numbers in parentheses indicate the combined total of headlines and leads
*There were only three topics for SJRCC for all three years
**Percentages for UF and FSU are based on the combined totals for the *Tampa Tribune* and the *Florida Times Union*

Sources

A comparison of the more frequently cited sources for the institutions studied in the *Tampa Tribune* indicates some differences between the four-year universities and the community colleges. Members of the faculty were the most cited source for USF, followed by professionals, staff, campus administrators, and students (See Table 9).

For both HCC and PHCC, faculty were not among the five highest news sources. Staff members were the leading news sources for HCC, followed by professionals, campus administrators, with advocates, presidents, and students tied for fourth. For PHCC, presidents ranked first among news sources, with students and staff ranked second and third overall. Three news sources, campus administrators, professionals, and public officials, tied for fourth.

Professionals were clearly the number one news source for stories focusing on UF. After that, there was a sharp drop-off leading, to advocates, alumni, faculty, and campus administrators. Due to the small number of stories focusing on FSU in the *Tampa Tribune*, the numbers for the news sources are likewise small. As a result, there were only seven news sources for FSU.

When examining the rankings of news sources in the *Florida Times Union*, the same top five news sources that were ranked for USF were also among the top five news sources for UNF. Members of the faculty were the highest-ranking news sources for UNF and USF. After that, however, the rank order changed. The second most cited news sources for UNF were campus administrators, followed by students, professionals, and staff (See Table 10).

A comparison of FCCJ and UNF shows that four of the top five news sources for FCCJ were campus administrators, professionals, staff, and faculty. Faculty, which ranked first for UNF, was tied for fifth for FCCJ. Campus administrators were the highest ranked news source for FCCJ, with professionals second, staff third, presidents fourth, and public officials tied for fifth.

An analysis of the news sources for SJRCC was limited due to the small amount of coverage the college received in the *Florida Times Union*. Overall, there were only nineteen news sources combined. The leading news sources for SJRCC were campus administrators and staff members, which were tied at five sources each. Ordinary citizens placed third overall, with professionals and public officials tied for fourth.

Because there were more articles in the *Florida Times Union* covering UF and FSU, there were also more news sources cited, particularly for FSU. For UF, outsiders

were cited more often than those who work for the institution. Professionals and public officials were tied for first among news sources. Another outsider, advocates, was tied for third overall in the news source ranking for UF. Students, who are clearly connected to but may not be employed by the university, also tied for third. Only campus administrators were among the top five news sources for UF that are clearly employed by the university.

The rankings of news sources for FSU were almost completely opposite in comparison to UF. The leading news sources for FSU were campus administrators, followed by presidents, faculty and professionals tied for third, and public officials. For FSU, unlike UF, most of its news sources in the *Florida Times Union* were employees of the university.

Similar to the topics, overall there was some consistency in terms of the source citations for all of the institutions (See Table 11).

Although the order from institution to institution varies, both campus administrators and professionals appeared in the top five most cited sources. In three of the institutions, campus administrators were the most often cited source, and in one instance, professionals were the most cited source. Professionals were ranked second four times on the five most cited sources lists.

FCCJ and SJRCC were the only institutions where students were not among the top five listed news sources.

Faculty sources ranked first for USF and UNF. With the exception of FCCJ, where it ranked fifth, faculty sources did not make the more frequently cited lists of the community colleges.

Presidents/chancellors made only two of the more frequently cited lists: PHCC, where it ranked first, and FCCJ, where it ranked fourth.

There were some similarities when comparing the breakdown of sources for UF and FSU in the *Tampa Tribune* and the *Florida Times Union*. FSU was closer to USF, UNF, and the community colleges with the type of news sources cited more frequently. However, of UF's more frequently cited news sources, there was one source, alumni, that did not appear in the lists of the other institutions.

Table 9
Proportion of News Sources by Institution In Percentages
Tampa Tribune: July 1, 2000-June 30, 2003

Source	USF	UF	FSU	HCC	PHCC
Advocate	6(27)	3(9)	0(0)	10(4)	7(2)
Alumni	2(9)	15(5)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Camp Adm.	13(60)	9(3)	25(2)	15(6)	11(3)
Coach	1(6)	0(0)	13(1)	1(2)	0(0)
Faculty	17(76)	12(4)	0(0)	5(2)	0(0)
Ord. Citizen	6(26)	6(2)	0(0)	7(3)	0(0)
President	7(30)	0(0)	0(0)	10(4)	29(8)
Professional	16(72)	10(30)	25(2)	17(7)	11(3)
Public Off	9(39)	6(2)	25(2)	5(2)	11(3)
Staff	14(66)	6(2)	0(0)	20(8)	14(4)
Students	10(47)	6(2)	13(1)	10(4)	18(5)

Note: Numbers in parentheses indicate the total of a particular news source

Table 10
Proportion of News Sources by Institution In Percentages
Florida Times Union: July 1, 2000-June 30, 2003

Topic	UNF	UF	FSU	FCCJ	SJRCC
Advocate	6(15)	15(4)	0(0)	7(6)	0(0)
Alumni	2(4)	0(0)	4(1)	0(0)	0(0)
Camp Adm.	17(44)	15(4)	21(6)	18(16)	26(5)
Coach	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Faculty	18(46)	7(2)	14(4)	10(9)	0(0)
Ord. Citizen	5(12)	4(1)	4(1)	7(6)	16(3)
President	10(25)	11(3)	18(5)	12(11)	5(1)
Professional	13(33)	19(5)	14(4)	15(14)	10(2)
Public Off	7(19)	19(5)	11(3)	10(9)	10(2)
Staff	10(27)	7(2)	7(2)	13(12)	26(5)
Students	13(34)	15(4)	7(2)	9(8)	5(1)

Note: Numbers in parentheses indicate the total of a particular news source

Table 11

Rank order of Top 5 News Sources by Institution In Percentages

July 1, 2000-June 30, 2003

USF	Faculty 17(76)	Prof. 16(72)	Staff 14(66)	Camp Ad. 13(60)	Students 10(47)
HCC	Staff 20(8)	Prof.17 (7)	Camp Ad.15(6)	Students 10(4)	Adv Gr10(4)
PHCC	President 29(8)	Students 18(5)	Staff 14(4)	3 Sources Tied 11(3)**	
UNF	Faculty 18(46)	Camp Ad. 17(44)	Students 13(34)	Prof.13 (33)	Staff 10(27)
FCCJ	Camp Ad. 18(16)	Prof. 15(14)	Staff 13(12)	President 12(11)	2 Sources Tied 10(9)***
SJRCC	Camp Ad.26 (5)	Staff 26(5)	Ord. Cit 16(3)	Prof. 10(2)	Pub Off 10(2)
UF*	Prof. 22(20)	Adv Gr 15(13)	Camp Ad. 8(7)	Alumni 6(5)	Pub Off 6(5)
FSU*	Camp Ad.22 (8)	Prof. 22(8)	President 14(5)	Pub Off 14(5)	Faculty 11(4)

Note: Numbers in parentheses indicate the total of a particular news source
*Percentages for UF and FSU are based on the combined totals for the *Tampa Tribune* and the *Florida Times Union*
**Camp Ad. 11(3) Prof. 11(3) Pub Off 11(3)
***Faculty 10(9) Pub Off 10(9)

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

According to David Lavin (2000) of the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, "the expansion of higher education has been a contested process" (p. 1140). Napoleon stated that "the whole secret of the art of war lies in making oneself the master of communications" (Liddell Hart, 1967, p. 183). If community colleges are to win in the proverbial trenches of public opinion and public policy, effective communication is essential.

Edmund Gleazer stated, "Positive public opinion is important to help community colleges" (1998, p. 177). According to Walter Lippmann (1921), public opinion "is based not on direct or certain knowledge, but on pictures made by himself or given to him" (p. 25). Mass media, through their words and images, can influence public opinion. (McCombs, 1977). For those who are involved with developing a positive image of the community college, these are critical points. How do the media contribute either to the positive or negative image of the community college? Both William Rainey Harper (Cutlip, 1995) and Dale Parnell (Losak, 1994), two of the leading proponents of the community college movement, expressed their frustrations with the mass media.

Public opinion is important to community college leaders and mass media can influence public opinion. Therefore, based on the theories of agenda setting, framing, priming, fairness, balance, and public opinion models, what conclusions, if any, can be drawn from this study?

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Findings: Quantity of Coverage, Topics, Frames, and News Sources

Research Questions

Based on the findings of this study, what are the answers to the research

questions?

1.   Was there a difference in the number of articles focusing exclusively on
community colleges versus four-year institutions that appear in major metropolitan
newspapers?

The University of South Florida (USF) and the University of North Florida (UNF)
received far more coverage than Hillsborough Community College (HCC), Pasco-
Hernando Community College (PHCC), Florida Community College at Jacksonville
(FCCJ), and St. Johns River Community College (SJRCC).

2.   Was there a difference in terms of the sections in which articles focusing
exclusively on community colleges versus four-year institutions appeared in major
metropolitan newspapers?

The four-year universities dominated the "news" and "business" sections. The
community colleges were more often found in the "regional" section.

3.   Were community colleges framed differently than the four-year institutions in
articles that appear in major metropolitan newspapers?

The rank order and percentages of frames were consistently similar comparing the
four-year universities to the community colleges.

4.   Was there a difference in terms of the topics of articles focusing exclusively on
community colleges versus four-year institutions that appeared in major metropolitan
newspapers?

The five leading topics for the four-year universities and the community colleges
were similar. The rank order did not always match.

5.   Was there a difference in terms of the sources within articles focusing exclusively
on community colleges versus four-year institutions that appeared in major metropolitan
newspapers?

Campus administrators and staff members were common sources for both the
four-year universities and the community colleges. Faculty news sources were far more
commonly cited in university stories compared to the community colleges.

An Analysis of the Differences in the Quantity of Coverage
and Related Theories

The first point of comparison is the number of articles written about the four-year universities in the study versus the community colleges. An examination of the data indicates that the University of South Florida (USF), the University of North Florida (UNF), and, in some instances, the University of Florida (UF) and Florida State University (FSU), received more overall coverage than Hillsborough Community College (HCC), Pasco-Hernando Community College (PHCC), Florida Community College at Jacksonville (FCCJ), and St. Johns River Community College (SJRCC). This was particularly evident in the "news" sections of both the *Tampa Tribune* and the *Florida Times Union*.

One could argue that the four-year universities may deserve more coverage in proportion to the number of students they serve. USF serves approximately 37,000 students, including those in their graduate programs. HCC serves 19,000 and PHCC serves approximately 5,000 students. If the amount of coverage should be in proportion to an institution's number of students, however then HCC should be covered at least half as often as USF. However, in terms of total stories over the three years of the study, HCC's coverage did not equal 50% of USF's..

The disproportionate nature of coverage is even more telling when one compares UNF to FCCJ and SJRCC in the *Florida Times Union*. Including graduate students, UNF has an enrollment of approximately 13,000 students. FCCJ serves more than 20,000 students and SJRCC 7,700 students. FCCJ actually serves more students than UNF and SJRCC serves half as many students, but UNF received more coverage than the combined coverage of the two community colleges over the three years of the study.

Quantity of Coverage and Agenda Setting

To reiterate, agenda-setting theory posits that mass media affect media users in three ways: creating "awareness and knowledge" of issues, "establishing salience among publics," and focusing "public attention" to the "forefront of concern" (McCombs, 1977, pp. 90-91). Basically, media select and organize information; then the public chooses what information they deem to be more relevant.

Based on agenda-setting theory, readers of the *Tampa Tribune* and the *Florida Times Union* could potentially perceive that the four-year universities are more important because the public are afforded an opportunity to gain more knowledge about USF, UNF, UF, and FSU based on the amount of coverage they received from these newspapers. The community colleges, by contrast, would be perceived as being less relevant. This would be particularly evident for those readers who focus more on the "news" sections of these newspapers.

Agenda-setting effects are reduced when the mass media consumer already has high interest and knowledge concerning the topics covered (McCombs, Shaw, 1972, p. 185-186). For those readers of the *Tampa Tribune* and the *Florida Times Union* for whom HCC, PHCC, FCCJ, and SJRCC are not in the forefront of their particular interests, the agenda-setting effects could influence the public's perceptions of those institutions more than those readers who have a more direct interest in those community colleges.

In addition, in terms of one of the aspects of framing theory, the amount of coverage mass media can also "shrink an event, make it less prominent, reduce prominence, duration of coverage... reduce mass awareness" (Entman, 1991, pp. 9-10).

More media attention translates to more audience contact with an event. News events are more likely to be perceived as important depending upon the amount of coverage they receive. Based on the number of stories focusing on community colleges as opposed to the four-year universities in this study, HCC, PHCC, FCCJ, and SJRCC were framed as less significant than USF and UNF. If one looks at stories from the "news" sections of the *Tampa Tribune* and the *Florida Times Union*, even UF and FSU, in three out of four instances, exceed the community colleges in terms of coverage.

Quantity of Coverage and Priming

Priming theory involves the receiver of mass media messages connecting those messages with memories and thereby influencing their perceptions of the subject covered (Bryant & Thompson, 2002). When the mass media limit news coverage to specific agendas, the priming effect, in conjunction with the agenda-setting process, renders theses issues more important to the media consumer. If we then connect a memory of a community college, with the limited coverage it may receive, then the mass media consumer may be more inclined to perceive community colleges in a negative way. The media facilitate this process by limiting the number of issues covered, thereby, rendering certain issues more important from the perspective of the mass media consumer.

Regardless of the content of the articles in the *Tampa Tribune* and *Florida Times Journal*, the readers of these newspapers would have seen fewer stories covering the community colleges as compared to the four-year universities over the three years of the study. The community colleges would then be perceived as being less significant. If the newspaper content were connected with prior negative associations with community colleges, the priming effect would work against HCC, PHCC, FCCJ, and SJRCC.

Quantity of Coverage and Public Opinion Models

Channel variables play a significant role in the evolution of public opinion (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981). Newspapers are more of a factor in terms of setting the public agenda, while television has less of an influence upon public perception of the world. According to McCombs (1977), newspapers are a "prime mover of public opinion" because they "set the stage for public concern" (p. 92).

How then might this imbalance in the amount of coverage of the community colleges influence public opinion particularly among those in society who are both more empowered and more motivated to consume mass media, newspapers in particular, and affect societal change?

In the media ecology theory of information dissemination, the daily newspaper plays a key role in public awareness. According to Grunig's situational theory, newspapers play the primary role in presenting complex information to receivers (Van Leuven, & Slater, 1991). The people who are more likely to take political action are referred to as "active publics" and "aware publics." In general, the "active publics," who are already prone to take action without the incentive of mass media, use this information to strategize group action. The "aware publics" also monitor the newspaper, but they do so to determine whether action is in their better interests (Van Leuven & Slater, 1991).

Those "active publics" and "aware publics" who read the *Tampa Tribune* and the *Florida Times Union* would have more information to draw from in terms of whether or not to take action and what action to take as it pertained to USF and UNF as opposed to HCC, PHCC, FCCJ, and SJRCC. For the "active publics," who use the newspapers to affect strategies toward their interests and to take action, there is less coverage of the

community colleges as opposed to the four-year universities to link to those interests and influence actions. Whether this is to the advantage or disadvantage of the community college may depend, in part, on the contents of the coverage, along with the preconceived beliefs and prior knowledge of the readers of the newspapers.

Those who read newspapers tend to be more interested in politics (Pfau & Parrott, 1993). If policymakers, business people, and community leaders can be counted among the "active publics" and "aware publics," then based on the quantity of coverage, the community colleges are at a disadvantage in terms of accessing these key members of the political process.

Quantity of Coverage and Fairness & Balance

"Fairness usually means the simple inclusion of the other side of the story about the conflict. Balance concerns how equally sides of a conflict are treated relative to one another" (Fico & Cote, 1998, p. 5). This study did not compare treatment of a community college with a four-year institution within stories. In fact, there were no instances in which the name of one of the community colleges and the name of the four-year university in the survey shared a headline or lead. Therefore, it was not possible, in those terms, to measure fairness and balance.

However, if one is to look at the entire population of stories and compare the community colleges with the four-year universities, there is fairness, but not balance. This imbalance in the coverage could be related to the theory that media coverage is influenced by the perceived status of what is being covered (Fico & Cote, 1998).

According to Herbert Gans (1980), "The news deals mostly with those who hold power within various national or societal strata; with the most powerful officials in the

most powerful agencies;... ." (pp, 61-62). Included in that list of powerful agencies that media focus on are "quality universities" (p. 61).

If journalists do not perceive community colleges to be part of the upper social strata, then this may have influenced the lack of coverage that the community colleges received over the course of the study. Dale Parnell may have been correct when he lamented that reporters' lack of experience in the community college environment interfere with their ability to understand their overall value (Griffith & O'Conner, 1994).

If some politicians, who one could concede are some of the more "active" and critical members of the public opinion process, believe that community colleges "are not glamorous" (Tschechtelin, 1999, pp. 112-113), then this attitude could be fueled by their lack of connection with these institutions through the mass media. If the receiver of the message does not perceive value in the message, he or she is more likely not to attend to that message. (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981).

In terms of the numbers of stories covering higher education, the four-year universities seem to have the advantage. However, what have the results of this study shown in terms of the contents of the coverage? Do community colleges at least achieve some sort of equilibrium in terms of more positive coverage versus the four-year universities? Analyses of framing, topics, and news sources seem to indicate that in numbers of stories the community colleges studied fall behind the four-year universities, but in content, the results are more balanced.

Framing

An analysis of the framing or slant of the articles indicates that there was no real difference among institutions or newspapers. The "other" or neutral frame was always

first, success second, conflict and failure tied for third, and consensus came in last. The results from this study were similar to the findings in the Devitt (1998) study. This is noteworthy in that framing coverage of higher education remained consistent in both studies whether one is examining local or national newspapers.

This was somewhat unexpected. Based upon years of anecdotal evidence and testimony, primarily from those associated with community colleges, the expectation was that community colleges would fare more negatively than the four-year universities. What then can we extrapolate from these results?

The results show a balance overall in terms of framing. However, if we connect the overall imbalance in the amount of coverage, what is the effect on the consumers of this information? If USF has more total articles that are framed negatively than HCC, it also has more articles that are framed positively. What is the overall influence in terms of agenda setting, priming, and public opinion influences? Because "other" and "success" frames are more likely to be read by the consumers of these newspapers, does it follow that the four-universities have the advantage over the community colleges?

Framing influences, like those of agenda-setting, are also mitigated by the perceived salience of the information (McCombs, Shaw, 1972, p. 185-186). For those who read the *Tampa Tribune* and the *Florida Times Union* and have attended either USF or UNF and for whom HCC, PHCC, FCCJ, and SJRCC are not in the forefront of their interests, the large number of articles that are framed "success" will have more influence on their perceptions of those community colleges as compared to the four-year university that they attended.

In future studies the frames, rather than rely upon a previous study, could emerge from the data. This might yield additional frames such as human interest, responsibility, economic consequences, and morality (Semetko & Valenburg, 2000). This might reduce the number of stories coded as "other."

Topics

A surprising result of this study was that the "other" topic, leads or headlines that did not fit into any of the 20 other topics, figured so prominently. In the Devitt (1998) study, the "other" category ranked sixth overall for all of the articles coded. When a *post hoc* examination of all of the stories that were coded as "other" in either the headline or lead was done, it was discovered that forty-three percent were coded as other in both the headline and the lead. Fifty-seven percent of the articles coded as other in the headline or frame were coded as different topics.

The topic overall that had more "other" topics split between the headline or lead was "event/location." In fact, fifty-five percent of the stories that were coded as "event/location" in the headline or lead had "other" as its headline or lead. Because this topic did not exist in the Devitt (1998) study, one cannot draw a comparison between the two studies.

Is the higher number of "other" topics a product of a difference in national versus local newspapers? Topic categories such as "financial aid," "crime/tragedies," "military academies," "rankings," and "affirmative action" all ranked in the top most often cited topics in the Devitt (1998) study. None of these categories ranked as high in this study.

At the time of the Devitt (1998) study, stories such as the controversies related to the integration of women into The Citadel were prominent throughout the national media.

Therefore, would a replicated study of national news coverage of higher education yield similar results?

Another factor that might have influenced the higher numbers of "other" coded topics in this study, as opposed to the Devitt (1998) study, could be related to a difference in coding procedures. In the Devitt (1998) study, if there was a difference in the perception of the headline and the lead, the lead took precedence. In this study, the headlines and leads were coded separately. Does this make a difference? In some cases, such as for USF, if one only counts leads for the topics, the "other" category drops from first to second. But for HCC, the rank order does not change. For UNF, when counting the leads only, "other" actually moves up from second to first.

In his study, Devitt justified giving precedence to the lead over the headline because the individual who wrote the story was not the person who wrote the headline. He felt that the lead was a truer reflection of the story. A *post hoc* examination of the headlines for the *Tampa Tribune* that were coded as "other" indicated that, in regional stories in particular, the headlines were often very short in nature, sometimes three words or less. This lack of information may have led the coders to perceive these headlines as "other."

Both before and after the coding, the coders indicated that they were finding some of the leads challenging in terms of determining the topics in particular. Although the coders did not know from which newspapers the articles were selected, it was clear during the course of the study that the more troubling newspaper was the *Florida Times Union* in terms of coding the leads for topics. This, in part, may have led to a higher number of leads being coded as "other."

Another possibility was that some other topics could have been added, such as a "human-interest" topic. Journalists often try to simplify complex issues by looking for drama and human interest (Scheuer, 1999). In a study of European politics, Semetko and Valenburg (2000) identified one of the five common frames as "human interest." For example, there were two stories that were coded as "other," but could have been viewed as a "human interest" story. One article was about a grandmother who graduated from one of the universities and another story concerned a long-time college employee who had been recognized by his community for his volunteer service. Had "human interest" been included as a topic, one can only speculate on how this would have changed the totals on the "other" topic.

Topics such as "campus management" and "curriculum" were leading topics for USF, UNF, HCC, PHCC, FJCC, and SJRCC, which was not a surprise. It is understandable that the "research" topic figured prominently for USF and UNF, and the "Al-Arian" topic was prominent for USF. However the "event/location" topic figured far more prominently, both for the four-year universities and the community colleges in both newspapers, than expected.

A story coded as "event/location" could be something that is associated with the institution that is happening on the campus such as an art show, a play, or an orchestra performance. The event could also include when an organization, independent of the college, is using college or university facilities. This could include a little league baseball that team is using a college's field or a local high school science fair meeting in an auditorium. Considering that the study eliminated all articles less than 500 words, it was surprising that the number of articles coded as "event/location" were as high as they

were. Also, with the elimination of the Arts and Entertainment section as well as the Sports section, it was expected that this would lead to fewer articles coded in this area.

In addition, it was expected that if any of the institutions would dominate this area it would be the community colleges. For USF and UNF, "event/location" topic were ranked fifth and third respectively. Whereas for HCC, "event/location" ranked second, for PHCC fifth, and for FCCJ fourth. Is this a product of local newspapers general view of education? Is this a positive or negative? Because it was not expected that this topic would play a significant role, there was no attempt to differentiate between events associated and not associated with the college. However, a *post hoc* analysis indicated that fifty percent of the events were associated with the institutions.

In the national newspapers one would not expect to find the "event/location" topic. However, in terms of local newspaper coverage, what conclusions can one draw from a higher than expected number of "event/location" topics? Could it be that local news tends to trivialize higher education both in terms of the community college and the four-year university? For the community colleges in the study, which had far fewer articles than the four-year universities, the "event/location" topics had an even greater effect of reducing the number of articles related to education. Fourteen percent of the total of articles for all of the community colleges were coded as "event/location" in the headline, lead, or both compared to eight percent for the universities.

Why were there some topics that did not rank very high? In terms of the higher education agenda set by the newspapers in this study, "event/location" stories are more salient than "costs," "campus performance," "faculty issues," and "job market" to their readers. For those "active" and "aware publics," those individuals in the public opinion

model who are more likely to read newspapers and engage in the political process, are their perspectives of community colleges versus the four-year universities influenced based on what they might have read in the *Tampa Tribune* and the *Florida Times Union*?

If the overall comparison in terms of the topics differed more in terms of the community colleges versus the four-year universities studied, it would be far easier to draw a conclusion about potential reader influence. However, if one includes the fact that agenda-setting influences are more powerful for those mass media consumers with less prior knowledge about the agenda, who or are less likely to perceive the relevance of a subject, then the large number of the "event/location" topics would have even more influence for the readers who have little or no connection with the community colleges. If those readers are the "active and "aware publics," the policymaker, business, and community leaders, then they are more likely to perceive the community to be trivial based upon what they read. Therefore, from the perspective of the public relations practitioners who work for the community colleges, it is imperative that they endeavor to influence the local media to cover more significant aspects of the institution's goals and mission.

News Sources

According to Gans (1980), objectivity is a result of journalists focusing on "facts (or attributed opinions)" (p. 183). Those attributed opinions, or what sources are quoted in the story, are, in large part, a measurement of the fairness and balance of the story: "News, ultimately, is what sources tell reporters" (Fico & Cote, 1998, p. 2). Who is selected as a source can have a profound influence in terms of the perceived significance of one point of view versus another. As a result of this selection process, the amount and

direction of information can influence the perceptions of the community served and the outcomes of matters of public interest (Taylor, Lee & Davie, 2000).

Of the ten possible types of news sources coded, three types of news sources, campus administrators, staff, and students, figured prominently in coverage of most of the institutions in this study. In the Devitt (1998) study, campus administrators were also the most cited news sources followed by public officials, advocacy groups, and presidents/chancellors. The difference in rankings between this study and the Devitt study could be related to the differences in the types of newspapers used for the analyses. As previously mentioned, Devitt analyzed national newspapers, whereas this study analyzed local metropolitan newspapers. In addition, at the time of the Devitt study, the national news media were covering stories related to women endeavoring to enter The Citadel military academy. Therefore, both the nature of national versus local newspapers and the timing of the respective studies may have influenced some of the differences in the results.

Of those types of news sources more often cited, for all of the institutions, two were employees of those institutions. "Campus administrators" were important for almost all of the institutions in the study. FSU was the only institution where this type of source was not one of the five highest. "Staff" sources were cited prominently in all institutions with the exception of UF and FSU. Because "staff" included individuals from the institutions who were identified as "spokesperson," this might explain the high numbers for this news source.

Two surprises from the results of this study were that "presidents/chancellors" did not figure more prominently and that "professionals" were consistently some of the more

quoted sources for seven out of the eight institutions in the study. If one looks at the news topics and compares which news sources are the more prevalent for those topics, what will that reveal? Might there be a relationship between the topic of the story and who is quoted in the story?

Is it that presidents and chancellors are not sought after by the news media, or is it that they would rather have their administrators and staff speak for them? Overall, "campus administrators" and "staff" clearly outnumbered the "presidents/chancellors" as news sources for most of the institutions in the study. However, if one isolates the "campus management" stories and counts the number of news sources of each type for this topic, "president/chancellors" were cited 60 times as opposed to "staff" sources who were cited 37 times. "Campus administrator" was the most cited news source for "campus management" topics with 87 citations. "Faculty" were cited 36 times, which was fewer than "professionals" with 41 citations and "public officials" with 38. What is intriguing about these numbers is that for "campus management" topics, individuals who work outside of the institution are more likely to be cited than faculty.

Presidents and chancellors appear to be more likely to be cited for administration type stories, leaving the responsibilities for quotations for other areas of campus news to "campus administrators," "staff," and "faculty." In terms of a comparison of percentages of "presidents/chancellors" as news sources for the community colleges and the universities, there was little difference.

For every institution in the study, "professionals" was one of the five most commonly cited type of source. "Professionals" included lawyers, doctors, and businesspersons who are not employed by the institutions. One might expect a high

number of "professional" news sources with USF because of the high number of Al-Arian stories. But why were there so many "professionals" cited for the other institutions? Part of the answer to this question may lie in an examination of the previously mentioned "event/location" topic.

The "event/location" topic, which had higher numbers than expected, with the exception of "faculty," most of the news sources came from outside the institutions. Even "staff" was cited only six times overall as news sources for "event/location" topics. The most cited sources were "professionals," followed by "faculty," with "ordinary citizens" third, then "students" and "advocacy groups" tied for fourth. Without a thorough analysis of each "event/location" coded article, it is difficult to draw specific conclusions concerning the relationship of the topic and breakdown of the news sources. Specifically, why were "professionals" and other sources not employed by the institutions so often quoted for this topic?

As previously mentioned, the "other" topic had consistently some of the higher numbers for all of the institutions studied. An examination of the sources in stories that were coded "other" both in the headline and lead reveals that "staff" and "student" were the most often cited news sources for those stories. The remainder of the five most cited list, in rank order, were "professionals," "public officials," and "faculty." "Campus administrators" and "presidents/chancellors" came in sixth and ninth, respectively. "Advocacy groups" and "ordinary citizens" were cited more times than "presidents/chancellors." Particularly when looking at the larger than expected number of sources of "students," "advocacy groups" and "ordinary citizens," this indicates that

had a "human interest" topic been included as part of the study, there is a possibility that the numbers for the "other" topic might have been reduced.

"Students" were more likely to be cited in articles from the *Tampa Tribune* as opposed to the *Florida Times Union*. "Students" were one of the five highest ranked types of news sources for USF, HCC, and PHCC. UNF was the only institution covered by the *Florida Times Union* in which "students" made the list of top five source types. One might speculate that the "Al-Arian" stories might have led, in part, to the higher "student" totals in the *Tampa Tribune*. Because of the unique nature of the story, perhaps journalists could have wanted the input from those who were not university employees. However, a *post hoc* analysis showed that there were no "student" citations in any of the "Al-Arian" stories.

There is a final point to consider concerning the relationship of topics and the news sources, specifically, the relationship between "faculty" as a news source and the credibility of the institutions. It was not surprising to discover that for the "research" topic "faculty" was the most cited type of news source. Conversely, in the news stories with the "curriculum" topic, in both newspapers and for all of the institutions, "professionals" and "students" were cited more times than "faculty." However, further analysis comparing the community colleges to the four-year universities, revealed that of the 10 "faculty" cited in the "curriculum" topic, seven were from the universities and only three from the community colleges. Is this an indication of the overall perceived higher value of university faculty as compared to community college faculty by the reporters in this study? Without further analysis, this is difficult to state with any certainty. Are readers of these newspapers are more likely to see the professors from the

four-year universities presented in a positive light as compared to the community colleges? Is this an element of the mass media agenda that might influence the overall perceptions of community colleges versus four-year universities? From the limitations of this study, that is not a question that can be answered.

Conclusions

The results of this study indicated that HCC, PHCC, FCCJ, and SJRCC, in both the *Tampa Tribune* and the *Florida Times Union*, received far less overall coverage than USF and UNF, and in some instances, less than UF and FSU.

In terms of framing or the slant of the articles, there were practically no differences among the four-year universities and the community colleges. The "other" or neutral frame was always first, success second, conflict and failure tied for third, and consensus came in last.

The analysis of topics showed that "campus management," "event/location," "curriculum," and "other" were prominent among all of the institutions. The "research" topic was one of the five highest topics for USF and UNF. The "Al-Arian" topic was the third highest ranked topic for USF. Topics that were more prominent in the Devitt (1998) study, "costs," "campus performance," "faculty issues," and "job market," ranked low in this study.

Of the ten possible types of news sources, four types, campus administrators, staff, professionals, and students figured prominently in most of the institutions in this study. It is important to note that the institutions did not employ two of the four most often cited types of news sources. Faculty news sources were particularly low for the community colleges in the study.

In terms of total numbers of stories in this study, there was a clear imbalance favoring the four-year universities over the community colleges. However, in terms of article content, as specified in framing, topics, and news sources, there is no clear indication that the community colleges were presented less advantageously compared to the four-year universities.

Recommendations

Procedures

If this study is replicated, one of the areas where changes need to be made is in the area of topics and frames. Because the "other" topic and frame proved to be more prevalent than expected, rather than rely upon the frames derived from other studies, in future studies it would be better to let the topics emerge from the data.

An additional aspect to consider in future studies in terms of frames could include analyzing stories in terms of dominate and secondary frames. Because the articles in this study were only coded based upon leads and headlines, the results may not reflect the complete slant of the stories.

Another possibility for consideration for additional studies might include changing coding procedures. If, in the future, coders find the lead paragraph confusing, additional paragraphs could be considered for analysis.

New Studies

Additional areas for studies comparing the coverage of community colleges to four-year universities could include other major metropolitan newspapers in Florida, including the *Miami Herald* and the *Orlando Sentinel*. Regardless of whether this

replication indicates either similar or different results, the next step could include studies of newspapers across the United States.

Besides quantitative analyses, another possible focus for further study could include qualitative analyses comparing the coverage of community colleges to four year-universities. Theoretical aspects of semiotics could be a basis for these studies using computer-assisted text analysis methodologies (Popping, 2000).

In addition to content analyses, another aspect of understanding mass media coverage of higher education could include surveys of public relations practices of community colleges as opposed to four-year-universities. A comparison of news releases to news coverage could be an indication of differences between what the institutions consider to be salient to their interests versus what the newspapers consider to be of interest to their readers.

A more challenging approach to this area of study would be to design a survey or to interview journalists to ascertain their attitudes, particularly those who cover education, concerning community colleges. As a part of this survey, it might be of interest to see how many journalists attended a community college. Included in this research could include qualitative analyses of interviews of education journalists to ascertain attitudes that might influence how they report on higher education.

With evolutions in technologies related to internet communications, some in politics and education are using the World Wide Web to reach the public. Presidential candidates have used this non-traditional medium to present their messages with more depth and substance than might be found in other media such as newspapers and television (McKeown & Plowman, 1999). There are some higher education

administrators who already see the value in web-based communication to reach the public as an alternative means of public relations (Stoner & Cartwright, 1997). In addition, reporters for the larger newspapers are using more online resources, including accessing webpages, to enhance their newsgathering techniques (Garrison, 1999).

Therefore, another area that could be studied would be to survey the webpages of community colleges and four-year universities. The survey could examine not only the content of the public relations messages on each webpage, but also how easily both journalists and the public can access this information.

With the uncertainty of the economic climate, the ephemeral nature of public opinion, and the contentious nature of public policy, community colleges must endeavor to maintain a positive public image. *Community colleges will have few options but to plan accordingly to ensure public awareness of their beneficial roles in society* (Hasting, 2000, p. 10).

From the evidence of the agenda-building studies of the Christian Coalition (Huckins, 1999) and the pharmaceutical industry (Gosden & Beder, 2001), the agenda of the mass media can be influenced. The challenge for community colleges will be to muster the cooperation and the resources necessary to generate that influence effectively.

Recommendations for Community College and Higher Education Practioners

1. Conduct thorough analyses of press releases and news output.
2. Compare the news coverage of your institution to the coverage of other educational institutions.
3. Develop close relationships with the staff of the local newspapers.
4. Evaluate the institution's webpage in terms of accessibility of press releases.
5. Create a list, available to the media, of faculty and their specific expertise.
6. Cooperate with other institutions to build a positive media agenda.

APPENDIX A
NEWS FRAME DEFINITIONS

News frame is the tone or perspective established in each story's headline and lead. When the headline and lead have different frames, the lead determines the news frame. Failure or success reflect a journalist's perspective. Stories that do not fit into these frames are in the "other" category.

Conflict frame the headlines and leads emphasized disagreement between parties. The frame includes either criticism by one party of another (e.g., a faculty member criticizing an administrator).

Consensus frame the headlines and leads emphasized praise or agreement for one party to another.

Failure frame the headlines and leads emphasized shortcomings of an individual or individuals, institution, or policy.

Success frame, the headlines and leads emphasized the accomplishments of an individual or individuals, institution, or policy.

Other frame the headlines and leads are best described as neutral.

APPENDIX B
TOPIC DEFITIONS

The topic categories are mutually exclusive. When stories cover two or more categories, the topic in the lead and headline determine the category of a story.

Admissions/applications
Stories concern the number of applications a college or campus received, or the admissions process. Stories pertaining to affirmative action are placed in the Affirmative Action category.

Affirmative action
Stories focus on campus policies, court decisions, or legislation pertaining to affirmative action.

Campus groups
Stories pertain to student organizations, such as fraternities and clubs, and student life in general.

Campus management
Stories focus on campus budgets, cutbacks, finances, personnel changes (hirings, firings, departures), and accreditation.

Campus performance
Stories report on how the campus functions in areas not pertaining to management issues, such as the ability of graduates to perform in the workplace, and graduation rates

Costs/price
Stories concern tuition levels but not financial aid, which has its own category.

Crime/tragedies
Stories cover crimes committed on or near campuses, crime rates, binge drinking, fires, and other campus accidents.

Curriculum
Stories focus on graduation requirements and course offerings.

Event location
An event, not associated with the institution, is happening on the campus (An organization, independent of the college, is meeting in a classroom or auditorium; a little league baseball team is using a college's field)

Faculty issues
Stories discuss academic freedom, union activity, or other faculty issues excluding Tenure which has its own category

Federal, State, and Local Government Relations
Stories focus on relationship between campuses and government agencies or institutions, regarding topics such as research budgets, but not financial aid or affirmative action.

Financial aid
Stories discuss resource available to pay college costs, legislative activity pertaining to financial aid programs, scholarships, tax credits, default rates on student loans, and related topics.

Fund raising
Stories concern specific gifts to campuses or fund-raising practices in general.

Job market
Stories focus on job opportunities and earnings for college graduates.

International
Stories examine higher education beyond the United States

Rankings
Stories pertain to media rankings of colleges and universities.

Research
Stories reports research findings of higher education faculty

Tenure
Stories cover tenure as an issue, or report on individual faculty who did or did not receive tenure

Town relations
Stories concern relations between colleges and their surrounding communities

Testing/standards
Stories discuss the SAT or ACT, the students' scores on math language competency examinations at colleges and universities

Other:
Stories that do not fit into any of the above categories. Possible topics include dormitory living, non-traditional students, electronic mail, and commencement for example.

APPENDIX C
SOURCES DEFINTIONS

Advocacy groups
Sources included members of associations, representatives of ideological or political organizations, and lobbyists

Alumni
Sources include alumni or alumnae of a college or university

Campus administrators
Sources include vice presidents, deans and members of a campus' board of trustees, but not presidents or chancellors, who are listed in their own separate category

Coaches
These are the people who lead the team on the field. Athletic directors would be campus administrators.

Faculty
Sources include full professors, adjuncts, department chairs, and members of faculty senates. Faculty quoted for their expertise on topics that do not include curriculum and research are categorized as experts

Ordinary Citizens
Sources are ordinary persons who offer their view of an issue analyzed in a given news story. They can also be a relative or spouse of a source in another category, such as the husband or wife of a campus president or faculty member.

Presidents/chancellors
Sources include presidents and chancellors of colleges and universities.

Professional (e.g. lawyers and business persons)
Sources include lawyers, business persons, doctors, and other professionals who do not provide an expert opinion.

Public officials
Sources include government officials, judges, police officers, and candidates for public office.

Students
Sources include high school students, college student, and graduate students, who are often identified as teaching assistants or research assistant.

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Biography

Born in California, raised in Maryland, William Gombash III did not grow up wanting a career in education. At the University of Maryland, where he majored in radio, television, and film, Mr. Gombash aspired to be either a sportscaster or a film director. However, the circumstances of life led him in many other directions after graduation.

In 1988, Mr. Gombash entered the University of Central Florida (UCF), seeking a masters degree in communications. It was there that he discovered the two most important aspects of his life: his future wife, Elizabeth, and his love for learning.

After graduating from UCF in December 1991, Mr. Gombash became an adjunct professor of public speaking at Valencia Community College (VCC), Seminole Community College, and UCF in the fall of 1992.

In 1997, he earned a tenure track position at VCC, where he continues to teach. In addition to public speaking courses, he also teaches courses in film studies.
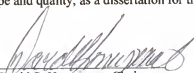
Mr. Gombash also teaches part-time at UCF, in undergraduate public speaking courses and in graduate courses in conflict resolution and mass media effects. He also teaches at Rollins College. There, he teaches a public speaking course and a course focusing on mass media and society.

In 1998, Mr. Gombash entered the doctoral program at the University of Florida, majoring in higher education leadership. There, he was able to focus on research in areas such as distance learning and technology in the classroom.

Today, Mr. Gombash lives with his wife Elizabeth in Orlando, Florida. His older daughter, Jennifer, attends Boston University where she majors in broadcast journalism. Her goal is to become an entertainment journalist. His younger daughter, Lindsey, is a senior in high school where she is the co-editor of the school newspaper. She plans to attend college where she wants to major in magazine journalism.

In addition to continuing his teaching duties, Mr. Gombash would like to expand his research related to mass media and higher education.

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Education.

David S. Honeyman, Chair
Professor of Educational Leadership,
Policy, and Foundations

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Education.

Dale F. Campbell
Professor of Educational Leadership,
Policy, and Foundations

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Education.

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Professor of Journalism and
Communications

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Education.

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This dissertation was submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the College of Education and to the Graduate School and was accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

December 2003

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